

The

ENGLISH HOME

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SMALL HOMES

From a Cornish cottage to a Victorian apartment

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The enduring appeal of
hand-stamped pattern

SEEKING SANCTUARY

Inspiration from designers' own bathrooms





The ascending branches of Colefax and Fowler's Belmont printed linen wallcovering, £480 a 3.2m panel, draw the eye upwards to boost the sense of height in this sitting room.

SMALL *but* MIGHTY

Experts advise on how to make the very most of compact rooms, from creating the illusion of more space to adding impact with clever design

FEATURE AMELIA THORPE



From a country cottage to a compact townhouse, petite has potential. There are lots of interesting ways to make the most of smaller rooms, offering improved comfort, practicality and style, no matter the dimensions.

Design and decorating

Whether a sitting room, kitchen, bedroom or any other space, interior designer Hattie Hansard of Joanna Wood recommends maximising natural light. 'Keeping windows unobstructed, choosing lighter-weight curtains or adding a well-placed mirror really helps bounce light around and open up the space,' she says. 'Even just one mirror opposite a window can double the sense of depth.' Other reflective surfaces, such as gloss lacquer or paint, can have a similar effect, helping to create an illusion of spaciousness.

Turning her attention to layout and the proportions of furniture, Hansard says, 'It's not about buying tiny pieces for a small room, but more about avoiding anything that feels bulky for the space. Slimmer silhouettes, sofas on legs, open bases, all these little details create more breathing room.' And less is more, she says. 'I'm careful not to let things get overcrowded; clutter tightens a space faster than anything else.' She also recommends a zoned layout, rather than pushing all the furniture up against the walls. 'Floating a sofa



ABOVE Woodwork and cabinetry in soft yellow adds warmth to this cottage kitchen, designed by Max Rollitt.

LEFT The Heritage cloakroom basin in Duck Egg Blue, £667 from CP Hart, has a slim profile, with a depth of just 250mm.

RIGHT Terry printed linen, £156 a metre by Rita König for Schumacher, adds rich warmth to the walls, while a light-painted panelled ceiling creates an illusion of height.





in the room or grouping pieces into little functional clusters makes it feel much more considered and less cramped. Paradoxically, when you pull furniture away from the walls, the room often ends up feeling bigger.'

Colour can also be used to powerful effect. 'Light colours are a great way to make a small space feel larger, particularly in rooms where there is limited natural light,' explains Cath Beckett, co-founder of interior design studio Yellow London. 'Creams, whites and neutrals will open up any room and make an effective blank canvas on to which you can layer other colours and pattern in a way that won't overwhelm the eye.' Cath also suggests that a light-coloured backdrop in a multi-functional room is a good way to create a consistent, calm and connected feel. In a recent project, a lower-ground-floor compact space (*above*) is designed with distinct zones for relaxing and reading, as well as working at a desk. Soft whites have been used through the room, with a stronger rust colour used across the built-in shelving in the sitting area, linked to textiles and a console in the home office space. 'These pops of colour bring in personality without taking over the room and help make the space feel cohesive,' she explains. 'Using rugs or furniture is a great way to visually define the different zones within an open-plan space, even a smaller one, while ensuring that the overall atmosphere is open and relaxed.' ►

ABOVE The combination of bespoke fitted bookcases and freestanding pieces creates a multifunctional but streamlined space in this design by Yellow London.

RIGHT A cloakroom is tucked under the stairs in this space-enhancing design by The Vawdrey House.





If a room has no natural light or an awkward shape that can't be altered, such as a sloping ceiling, it may make more sense to lean into its compact size and create a jewel box-like cocooning effect with rich colour or exciting pattern. 'Wallpaper is a wonderful device for making a smaller space feel special, cohesive and cosy,' says designer Sophie Harpley. 'Pattern ignites imagination and distracts all thoughts away from the limits of a space by putting the emphasis on playful design.' A meandering pattern, such as a trailing vine, can lead the eye around the space, creating a sense of depth and softening awkward corners. 'Sometimes people are concerned about patterns being too busy, especially taken up over the ceiling, but I believe that sense of being wrapped in print actually brings a sense of escapism and has quite a soothing effect,' she adds.

Storage solutions

One of the most powerful ways to make a smaller space feel larger and more open is to reduce visual clutter, hence the need for thoughtfully considered storage. While freestanding pieces may work, bespoke storage may be required to make the most efficient use of every inch of space, whether under the stairs, in an unused corner or across the entire length of a wall, without any gaps. 'If your home has taller

'It's not about buying tiny pieces for a small room, but more about avoiding anything that feels bulky for the space. Slimmer silhouettes, sofas on legs, open bases, all these little details create more breathing room' Hattie Hansard, associate director, Joanna Wood

ABOVE In-tread drawers make clever use of every inch of space in this design by Own London.

RIGHT Designed for dotting about the room, the Chant portable table lamp, £285 from Lee Broom, makes a feature of any shelf or corner, whatever its size.

FAR RIGHT Topped with natural stone, the Clasp wall console, £2,268 by Sophie Paterson Interiors x Loom Furniture, offers space for a bowl for keys and a candle for fragrance, without impeding on essential floor space.





rooms, floor-to-ceiling built-in cabinets, wardrobes or shelving draw the eye upwards and create a sense of more volume and height,' says interior designer Eloise Pfeiffer of Pfeiffer Design. 'Pair this with concealed storage, such as in benches and behind wall panelling, and opt for multifunctional furniture, to keep things to a minimum.' Multifunctional ideas include ottomans, sofas and beds with integrated storage compartments.

Wall-mounted storage furniture that appears to 'float' can free up floor space and create a more spacious look. Examples include a wall-mounted vanity unit in a bathroom for cosmetics, shampoos and towels, or a console in the hallway, ideal for a shallow basket for keys and phones. Even a simple shelf can create useful storage and display space, such as ceramics in the kitchen, baskets in the laundry room or books in a child's bedroom.

Compact choices

Any room must be fit for purpose, containing at least the essential elements required for comfort and practicality. Most freestanding furniture is available in smaller sizes, including two-seater sofas, slender side tables and shallow-depth sideboards. In a small kitchen, multifunction appliances can do double duty, saving on space: many appliance manufacturers now offer induction hobs with integrated extractors and ovens with combination steam or microwave functions, while Fisher & Paykel makes a multi-

ABOVE Walls painted in Cotton Street and woodwork in Sloane Square, both from £35 for 1l emulsion, maximise the light feel of this compact breakfast space, while cabinets in Earth stain Chalk, £154.14 for 5l, all Mylands, add soft warmth.

RIGHT Bespoke storage maximises the practicality of this compact utility room, including a laundry-airer cupboard next to a broom cabinet, by Higham Furniture, utility room prices from £16,000.





ABOVE LEFT A bespoke shower enclosure has been constructed to fit the stepped ceiling and make the most of available space in this bathroom design by Simon Taylor Furniture, bathroom prices from £20,000.

ABOVE RIGHT Geraniums wallpaper, £180 a roll from Sophie Harpley, creates an immersive effect in this under-the-eaves bedroom, by Lucy Madeleine Design.

LEFT The Tree of Life ensemble, including table, mirror and stool, £29,900 from Cox London, create an elegant focus of this dressing area, tucked under the roof.

temperature CoolDrawer which can be set to fridge, freezer, pantry, chill and wine modes at the press of a button. Multifunction taps, such as the Quooker with Cube system, offer boiling, filtered, chilled, still and sparkling water all from one spout, so no need for a kettle cluttering the worktop.

Bathrooms are often small, so manufacturers have responded with a host of compact fixtures, as Yousef Mansuri, director of design at CP Hart explains: 'A standard bath is 1700mm in length, but built-in and inset baths are now available from around 1050mm.' While freestanding baths are usually designed to have space all around to set off their statement shape, smaller models are now available from around 1300mm in length. 'With any compact freestanding bath, we recommend wall-mounted bath controls, as opposed to a floor-mounted mixer, as the bath can then be pushed closer to the wall, thus saving floor space,' advises Mansuri.

'Shower enclosures are typically from 800mm x 800mm, but can start from 700mm x 700mm for a compact room,' he continues. 'We recommend frameless-glass shower enclosures, to make a small space seem larger, along with wall-hung toilets and basins so that more of the floor can be seen.' Short projection WCs and shallow-depth basins are useful for compact cloakrooms, with a wide choice available.

By maximising limited space in this way, it is possible to make a superbly functional home without sacrificing style or convenience. ■

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