



# UNIT-3 Design Elements

## Learning Outcomes

**By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:**

- ✓ Understand space and its impact on orientation, circulation, inter-zoning and fixture/furniture arrangements
- ✓ Develop design programmes and concepts that solve spatial problems in an interior space
- ✓ Discuss different aspects of colour schemes

## Unit 3

### Design Elements

#### Space

##### Function

Consider all the activities that take place in a room. A bedroom, for example, may be more than just a place to sleep. It may also be a place where someone can exercise, write letters or read. Similarly, a kitchen may be much more than a place to cook. It is just as likely to be a room where the family eats, or entertains guests on a regular basis.

Changing the use or function of a room is often beneficial. When designers plan a project, they follow a specific sequence:

1. They examine and change the structure, if necessary.
2. They plan the arrangement of the furniture.
3. They plan the lighting.
4. They select the scheme.

The order of the stages is quite specific; each operation logically follows the completion of the previous one. For example, it is not possible to position light fittings before you have planned where the furniture is going to be sited.

There are many reasons why people want to change the structure of their house in some way:

##### New Room Use

They may wish to convert an existing guest room to a dressing room.

##### Change of Lifestyle

Maybe a change of job is allowing someone to spend more time at home, and hence the desire join up a dining room to form a spacious sitting room.

##### Additions to the Household

On the arrival of a new baby, a room may need to be converted (or even built) as a nursery.

## **Proportion Corrections**

Would the removal of a picture rail improve the division of space within the living room?

## **Insufficient Natural Light**

By enlarging a window, you might make a darker corridor more inviting.

## **Floor Plans**

When assessing space, try to imagine the walls are invisible and that each room flows into the next. This can reveal new possibilities, and you may decide to dramatically reshape the space by removing or erecting partition walls. A floor plan is invaluable for working out the best use of space in a room. Draw the plan on 1-centimetre square paper, with, for example, 1 centimetre representing 20 centimetres in reality (1:20). Measure the walls and draw the outline of the room, marking the position of doors, windows, and fixed features such as radiators and power sockets. Write measurements around the outside of the plan for easy reference. You can then draw in the new layout for the room, including furniture, the television and any built-in features like cupboards and shelves. These must be drawn to the same scale as the room. This will be an invaluable source of reference when choosing furniture, light fittings, or new doors. It will also prove helpful for estimating quantities for paint or wallpaper, along with curtains or blinds.

## **Dimensions**

The floor plan will also help while deciding on furniture and decorations. Flexible furniture will increase the versatility of a small space - for example, a sofa bed can transform the living room into a spare bedroom when needed. Again, there can be many imaginative ways of creating extra storage space – for instance, by using drawers/containers on wheels casters that slide under the bed.

## **Room Too Small**

Working with limited space can be a challenge - taking advantage of some small space tips can make a big difference in how a room is perceived. It is possible to bring style and appeal to even the smallest space. With some thought and imagination, experts can do some exciting, functional things with small spaces. While developing an interior design plan, the following points must be considered to maximize the perception of a space:

### **Expand the View**

Reduce unnecessary walls to create more open, flowing space. Consider creating partial walls or pass through areas, as a way to create more openness in the floor plan. The space can be planned in a way that upon entering the house, you can see through the immediate space and partially into the next one. The sense of intrigue draws your eye toward the far room and invites you to explore the larger, attached space.

## **Co-ordinate the Colour Scheme**

Visually connected rooms feel larger. Paint the areas of the house in a common colour scheme, which will tie the rooms together, giving the perception of a larger space.

Define individual spaces using area rugs, furniture, artworks or an accent wall colour - if the architecture provides a viable wall space to accommodate it.

## **Unifying the Floor**

Use one flooring style for all adjoining rooms on the same floor. It will create a sense of continuity and connectedness, especially if the floor plan is small.

## **Install Recessed Lighting**

Recessed lighting creates a greater sense of height in areas with lower ceilings. Though these fixtures do not intrude on the space physically, the pool of light created adds warmth and sophistication to the scheme.

## **Maximize Scale**

When purchasing furniture for a small room, consider two-seater sofas instead of three-seaters (remember that on the three-seater sofas, you rarely see three people sitting together). Large and bulky furniture can overwhelm a small space. Going minimal doesn't mean 'dollhouse' furniture – it simply means you need to get the scale right for the specific room you are working with.

## **Utilize Multifunctional Furniture**

Versatile furniture pieces can be used as extra seating and provide much-needed extra space at the same time. A storage ottoman is a great example of this useful small space tip. It can perform three different functions at the same time as a coffee table, storage unit, and extra seating. Also consider a small pull-out sofa that can be converted to a guest bed when needed.

## **Get Creative**

Look for unique or oddly-shaped areas that can be good locations for built-in cabinets and display areas. Recessed wall areas such as light niches, for example, provide decorative features and storage spaces, without intruding on the main living area.

## **Use Mirrors and Glass**

Mirrors and transparent items help to create a sense of space. A mirror's reflection tricks the eye into believing that there is a window to additional, adjoining space. It is a very strong tool used for adding perceived space to smaller rooms. Transparent items create a sense of openness. Consider glass topped tables and glass fronted cabinetry, while minimizing the use of heavy, dark wooden objects in small spaces.

### **Consider a Murphy Bed**

This bed can be folded up against the wall, when not in use. This can be used in a bedroom which has to function as a home office at other times.



### **Reconsider the Curtains**

If windows have attractive mouldings, show them off by avoiding curtains and opting for natural bamboo blinds, or Roman shades for enhances privacy and texture. The absence of curtains will result in less intrusion into the space. Alternatively, an attractive window treatment that sits well within the window frame could be a perfect solution for a small space. The greater the difference between the colour of the wall and the curtains, the more the curtains will visually intrude upon the space.

### **Small Space Tips for Specific Rooms:**

#### **Bathroom**

- raised cabinetry over units (storage)
- Shallow wall mounted cabinetry (storage)

#### **Bedroom**

- Murphy bed
- Trundle bed (Compact yet expandable)
- Desk/ dresser combo (multipurpose furniture)
- Closet system.

#### **Kitchen**

- Combination range hood microwave (effectively combines the two spaces and saves counter space)
- Corner banquette (built in eating area)

## Other

- Large checkerboard floor patterns can create the illusion of more space in a room.
- Paint the ceiling lighter in colour than the walls to increase the sense of height.
- Install floor tiles in a diagonal pattern to increase the sense of floor space.
- Select furnishings that blend in with the background colours of the room.

## Room Too Big?

Working with a large space can be almost as challenging as dealing with a small space. In a very large living room if the furniture is too far apart, it will not look very functional or attractive. Being able to communicate properly in a social setting requires proper placement of furniture and an environment that encourages interaction.

Large rooms with unusual proportions - such as an L shaped room - also need special consideration. It is often easier to divide such spaces into two or more separate areas. For example, you can either create areas for different activities, or you can arrange two groups of seating. Alternatively, separate areas can be defined by different decorative treatments, perhaps by painting the walls in one area and using wallpaper in the other.

### Select Large Scale Furniture

Larger-scale furniture and artwork will carry more visual weight in a big room. It won't have as much tendency to disappear within the scene. Using items of a larger scale should not be confused with over-stuffing the room with furniture and accessories – striking the right balance is important.

### Create Social Islands

Multiple seating areas are often a more practical choice for a very large room. Create several conversation groupings within the space, rather than one excessively large and spaced out social space. Area rugs should be used to further anchor these social areas and enhance the perception of smaller, more intimate spaces within the larger design.



### Warm the Walls

Hues on the warmer side of the colour wheel seem to move forward and visually envelope a space to create a greater sense of intimacy. Take advantage of this by painting the walls in warm colours.

### **Bring the Ceiling Down**

The perception of a lower ceiling can be created by painting the ceiling in a darker tone than the walls.

### **Introduce Texture**

A strategic mix of tactile qualities can create a visual interest, drawing you into a space. Texture depth can be accomplished through careful choice of flooring, upholstery, draperies, furniture and other accessories.

The careful use of groupings, scale, colour, and texture can turn a very large space into a welcoming, accommodating and functional area - perfect for relaxation and entertainment.

### **Points to Remember**

- Do not block light by putting tall items in front of the window.
- Work out the 'traffic flow' through the room to allow freedom of movement.
- Avoid placing square or rectangular pieces of furniture at an angle in a corner as it creates dead space.
- Place televisions and computer screens away from the window and direct sunlight to avoid poor visibility.
- Position furniture to make maximum use of natural light.
- Make sure that the door into the room and the doors of the cupboards can be opened easily.
- Place lamps and electrical equipment near the sockets.
- In a dining room, don't forget to allow enough space around the table to move around.
- When designing wardrobes be careful to allow sufficient depth for coat hangers.

## **Colour**

Colour is one of the most uplifting and practical ingredients you can bring into a scheme. Almost all designers have a magic wand in their toolbox - it is called colour and it can:

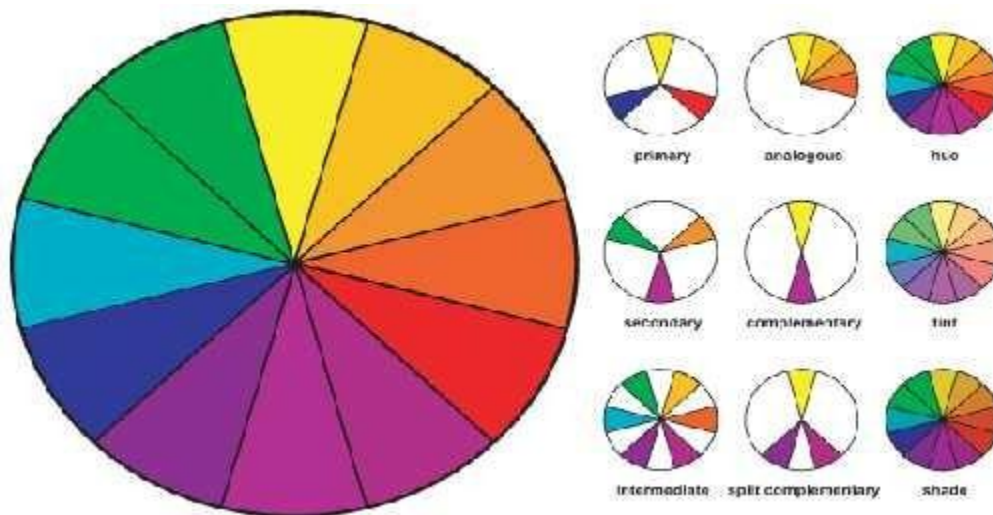
- evoke a particular period
- change the proportions of the room
- make a small room look larger
- lighten a dark room
- help to create a certain mood

- make a room feel 'cool' or 'warm'
- link different objects and areas in a house

A good colour scheme costs no more than a bad one. In the same way as you would not have to pay more for a chocolate ice-cream than for a vanilla cone, prices do not vary according to colour (or flavour). A good colour scheme adds value to everything present in the room, whereas a bad one destroys its charm altogether.

## The Colour Wheel

The colour wheel is the representative of the way we perceive light. It is a tool to demonstrate relationships between colours. Understanding its principles is a fundamental prerequisite for designing beautiful colour schemes.



### Primary Colours

Light is comprised of the colour spectrum - this spectrum is what we see in the rainbow. It is amazing that this splash of colour is built upon only three fundamental colours or hues. They are called the primary colours because they exist alone and are not created by mixing any other colours. These are red, blue and yellow. These colours lie an equal distance apart on the colour wheel.

### Secondary Colours

The colours created when mixing any two primary colours are called the secondary colours. For example, green is created by mixing the two primary colours yellow and blue, whereas red and yellow make orange when mixed together.

## Tertiary Colours

This mixing process can be extended further to create the tertiary colours - also called the intermediate colours. These are created when one primary colour is combined with one secondary colour in equal parts. For example, a blue-purple hue is developed when the primary colour blue is combined with the secondary colour purple. The colour wheel demonstrates how the different hues visually relate to one another.

## Tints, Shades and Tones

Various degree of colour strength can be created by adding white or black to a particular hue. This way, they take a slightly different appearance from the starting colour.

**Tint-** adds only white to create a tint of a particular colour i.e. the colour pink is actually a tint of red.

**Shade-** add only black to create a shade of that colour.

**Tone-** add various degrees of both black and white to a colour to create a tone of that colour.

The elements of colour related to the colour wheel also play a role in perception of space, when you bring colour schemes and colour psychology in the mix. These important aspects should be considered as part of the planning because they affect the overall look and feel of a room.

## Choosing a Colour Scheme

### Selecting Appropriate Colours

Ask yourself these questions in order to narrow down the choice of colours:

#### What is the room's function?

In a bedroom you may find pastel colours more acceptable, while in a child's playroom bright primary colours might be more appreciated.

#### How much time is to be spent in the room?

A strong vibrant colour may be fine for the cloakroom, but unsuitable for the bedroom where more time is spent.

#### What is the orientation of the room?

If it is north facing, you may counteract the coldness of the light by introducing a colour from the warm side of the wheel. Whereas, if the room faces south, this will allow you to base your scheme on one of the cooler colours.

### **Does the size of room need adjustment?**

By painting or papering the walls in warm dark colour, you can make a large room look smaller.

### **What mood you want to create?**

Is the living room, for example, to be a lively or tranquil space?

### **Will the room be used mostly during the day or at night?**

For a room like a dining room, which is mostly used at night, make sure that your chosen colours look good in artificial light.

### **What are the colours of the existing possessions you want to accommodate in the room?**

These may inspire the starting point for your scheme.

If the room is to be a place for rest and relaxation, soft greens and blues tend to work well in encouraging rest, and would be good a consideration for bedrooms.

On the other hand, more attractive social spaces like dining rooms or living rooms might benefit from colours on the warmer side of the colour wheel. Whatever the case, there is no specific rule about colour and where particular colours must be used in the home.

## **Colour and Light**

It is very important to consider natural light when choosing colour, because light can either bring a colour to life or deaden it. First, be aware of the *type* of natural light coming into the room. The colder the light, the better suited it is to use warmer colours- cream as opposed to brilliant white, terracotta rather than orange, aquamarine instead of turquoise. Secondly, observe how the external factors affect the light in the room. The light in a built-up area is filtered and flattened, and is quite different to that found in the open spaces. The amount of light that a room receives also has a profound effect upon colour. A room with abundant sunlight from windows facing south will convey a warmer glow on the wall colour, whereas a room facing north will reflect a bluer light off the wall. It is tempting to paint a dark area brilliant white, but this will only make it look dull and uninspiring. Work with the *character* of the room, rather than trying to force a colour scheme on it. Dark rooms look great painted in rich shades such as mushroom or vermilion red. These dramatic colours are ideal for rooms used mainly in the evening or in winter, like dining room or cosy living rooms.

Consider the effect of artificial light on colour. In rooms with only one overhead lighting source, the light becomes diffused and the colours become dull. It is therefore best to create a layered scheme, including uplighters that can be used to 'wash' a wall or spotlights that highlight key features. The choice of bulb and shade is also important. Halogen bulbs produce a clear white light that has the least discernible

effect on colour. However, it is diffused or reflected. Halogen light is usually too bright for rooms intended for relaxing. Here, the warmer glow of tungsten bulbs is more comfortable.

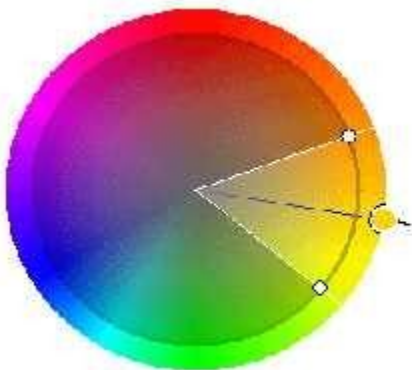
Before completely painting a room with a chosen colour, paint a sizeable area on one wall of the room and observe how the colour looks at different times of the day and night. If you decide that it is not quite the right hue that is required, you can fine tune it by trying a shade or two lighter or darker. The process will help you get the right colour scheme and will save you time and money.

## Colour Schemes

An interior design scheme can be inspired by anything, such as a beautiful rug, a pretty pattern - even nature itself can spark inspiration. The possibilities are endless. One of the keys to developing a good interior design scheme from any source of inspiration is to use a single dominant colour and then support it with one or two other colours from the scheme, but in lesser amounts. Working to achieve the right ratio between the colours within the scheme is very important – it can often make or break the look as a whole. Even if there is no particular inspiration for a scheme, tempting interiors can be designed from these common colour schemes.

### Analogous

This type of colour scheme consists of the hues which lie next to each other on the colour wheel. It usually projects a very unified and cohesive look. Analogous colour schemes work best if the colours are all from either the warm side or the cool side of the colour wheel, not a mixture of both.

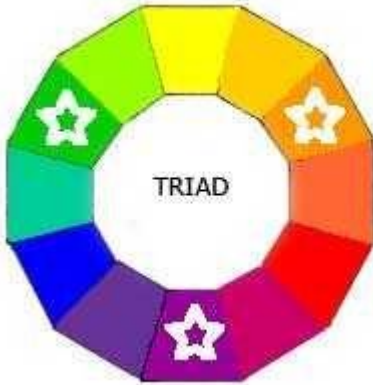


### Complementary

Consider using a complementary colour scheme if you want to bring attention to the room. The main palette consists of the colours opposite to each other on the colour wheel.

### Triad

This colour scheme consists of any three colours equally spaced around the colour wheel.

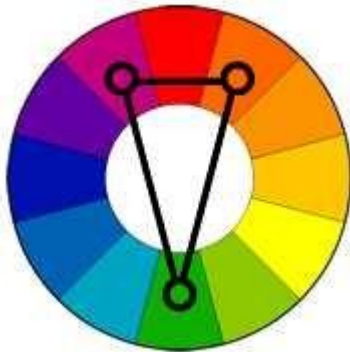


### Monochromatic

In this approach, one colour is used in various tints, shades and tones. Black and white may be introduced within this type of colour scheme. A monochromatic colour scheme can look very sophisticated and unified. The key to success with this scheme lies in creating variations with the chosen colour scheme.

### Split Complementary

This is a variation on the complementary colour scheme, in a slightly more sophisticated guise. It is composed primarily of one dominant colour and two hues that sit across on either side of its complementary colour directly across the colour wheel.



### Colour Psychology

When planning a room scheme, interior design colour psychology should also be considered. The appropriate interplay of a colour and its tonal value helps achieve the feel that is required for a room. Colours can be perceived as warm or cool, depending on where they lie on the colour wheel. In interior design colour psychology, the yellow, red and orange region is considered the warm colour zone. Whereas the purple, blue and green area is considered to give a cool feeling. There are beiges and muted greys that don't really have a warm or cool projection in interior colour psychology. These are referred to as temperature **neutrals**. The colours on the warm side of the wheel are advancing colours and give a closer and cosier feel. If you have to decorate a large space that lacks intimate appeal, consider using colours

from this part of the spectrum. On the other hand, hues from the cool side tend to recede visually, suggesting an open space. These are therefore good to use in small spaces.

## The Warm Colours

### Red

Red is associated with passion, heat and energy. This colour is very bold in its pure form. It can be very elegant and add a lot of character to a colour scheme - both traditional and contemporary. It is a good accent to green, which lies opposite red on the colour wheel. The stronger values of red can be highly stimulating and sometimes overpowering. Even in its softer tint of pink, red can add much value to a scheme. Traditionally, pink was associated with love, and romance, though this is now disappearing. Red is considered appetite-inducing, which is why many restaurants are decorated in this colour. The deeper values of red – plum, rose and burgundy - add warmth, richness and elegance, without being too overpowering. Like all warm colours, these benefit from the introduction of a little contrast with a cool colour or definite neutral, such as pure white, black or clear grey.

### Orange

Orange is associated with sunshine and cheerfulness. It brings together the energy of red and the intellect of yellow. In its pure form, it is as demanding and advancing as red. Orange in Greek mythology was the colour attributed to Zeus, the supreme ruler of the gods.

Orange creates a highly stimulating scheme if its stronger values are used, or when it is contrasted with black, white or its complement blue. Use these strong combinations for children's rooms, or to create a welcoming entrance hall. When used in its more muted form, it is less overwhelming. Terracotta flooring, apricot fabrics and other muted varieties of this hue can be quite pleasing to the eye.

### Yellow

Yellow is a joyful and uplifting colour associated with summer. The symbolic colour of the life-giving sun, and hence linked with nature. Yellow is associated with creative energy, the mind, intellect and power – it also symbolises wealth. Almost any value of yellow will bring warmth and light into the darkest and coldest room. Yellow can create a focal point when paired with a neutral. The paler yellows have a high reflective value, and can therefore make a small and dark room look much larger and brighter. In its pure form, yellow can be quite overwhelming. Its lighter tints, however, can look clean and fresh. As an accent colour, yellow can provide an effective 'pop' in a design scheme.

## The Cool Colours

### Purple

Purple is associated with tranquillity, opulence and fashion – both in interior design and colour psychology. Because of its position on the colour wheel where warm and cool meet, its bias towards red or blue determines its degree of coolness. It takes on warmer characteristics with red tones. Some tones of violet can be bit intense, but pastel lavenders give a very fresh and uplifting feel to a room.

### Blue

Blue is associated with calm, trust and sensitivity. Blue can easily be paired with many other colours and is therefore a common choice in a colour scheme. Usually it is used with whites, greens and yellows.

### Green

Green is the colour of nature, relaxation and rest. Green is very versatile in working with other colours as it is the colour of nature. In many cultures, green is also the colour of fertility. Today, the 'green' image also sums up the world's collective refusal to tolerate pollution and damage to the environment. Coming halfway between the warm and cool colours, green is the colour of harmony. It is easy on the eye and creates an atmosphere of relaxation. When green is contrasted with its complement, red, the result is very stimulating. Green colour recedes, so in its pale values, it gives an impression of space. Most greens are cool, so you might need to warm them up with few contrasting accessories and crisp neutrals.

## Colour Tones

Tonal values play an important role in interior design colour psychology. Lighter tones are more reflective, and therefore we see these as moving away from us. They give the illusion of more space. By contrast, deeper and darker colour tones reflect less light and appear closer to us. This creates a sense of closer, more intimate space. Consider both hue and tonal value when planning a design scheme.

When planning a colour scheme, you need to think about many things: the size and shape of the room you are going to decorate, its orientation (which way it faces), and how much natural light it receives.

You also need to consider the intensity of the colours you choose. If you put too many similar tones together, the effect will lack contrast, so different tonal values should be combined. This is particularly important when working with a monochromatic scheme, one based on neutrals or anytime you're decorating a room with mainly plain surfaces. The secret of good interior design lies in combining the practical with the aesthetic. It is therefore wise to choose the mid and darker tones for the surfaces that receive most wear, such as the floor and upholstery, and to

use paler colours on the

walls and ceilings which, are easier to keep clean. Stronger and pure hues can be introduced in the form of accents and accessories.

### **Bringing in Harmony**

Some of the most harmonious colour schemes are made by working with different values of one colour, to create monochromatic or single colour schemes. Such a scheme is calming and relaxing, and when blues or greens are used, it suggests space and elegance. Colours that are next to or adjacent to each other on the colour wheel naturally harmonize each other.

### **Bringing in Contrast**

Contrasting and complementary colour schemes are most stimulating, therefore should not be used in areas intended for relaxing. You can create contrasting schemes by using two dynamic opposites: blue/ orange, yellow/ violet, red/ green, but also think about tonal contrast and the use of a neutral as a link. If pale primrose is combined with rich plum-purple, cream can be used as the neutral. A simple way of creating a contrasting scheme is to combine a warm colour with a cooler colour, which need not necessarily be the complete opposite. Blue can be used, for instance, with yellow.

### **Creating a Feeling of Warmth**

All the warm colours in their various tints, shades and tones work well in cool, dark and north or west-facing rooms. Warm colours can be used to create a cosy atmosphere. The warm, long wavelength colours include red, red/orange, yellow/orange, yellow and some yellow/greens. You can also use their various tones, tints and shades, such as pink, rose, wine red, gold, apricot and terracotta to create the same effect. For added interest you can bring strong cool accents into mainly warm scheme.

### **Creating Excitement**

The way you put colours together is called creating colour harmonies, although sometimes you may wish to create excitement rather than harmony. For instance, a stimulating affect can be created in a children's playroom by using contrasting or complementary colours. Try combining a warm with a cool, such as red with green, blue with orange, purple with yellow. All these colours are direct opposites on the colour wheel, and can be very strong and dominant. A softer and still stimulating scheme can be created by using pale and subtle values of the complementary colours, or by pairing yellow and blue, or grey and pink. It is also a good idea to add plenty of textural contrast to exciting stimulating schemes. For example, shiny and light-reflecting surfaces can be combined with rough rustic and matte surfaces that are light-absorbing.

### **Creating Calm and Relaxation**

There are the adjacent or neighbourly colours, which are found next to each other on the colour wheel. When creating a relaxing scheme, work with colours from the same family. You can try

yellow/green and blue/green. Calm schemes can include mainly warm or mainly cool colours. For an even more relaxing

effect, you can work with a monochromatic colour scheme where different values of one basic hue are used.

### Using Neutrals

Natural and neutral textures can also be used to create a relaxing area, but they should come from the same family. The only true neutrals are black, white and grey. When these three non-colours are used together, they can be highly stimulating - especially if combined with bold patterns and lots of different textures. These days, other accepted neutrals (although some may include different colour bias) include cream, beige, off white, mushroom, brown and the colours of natural untreated materials, such as wood, sea, grass, stone and slate.

## Pattern

Design schemes are referred to as colour schemes, but there are two other ingredients that are as important as colour - without which, a scheme lacks depth and interest. It is the skilful use of pattern and texture that makes the scheme come to life. Pattern has been used for thousands of years to decorate houses, objects and people. Patterns may be printed directly on the fabric, or woven *into* the fabric during manufacture. Very often, a pattern can be the starting point for a complete colour scheme, with the colours in the pattern providing the colour palette for paints, plain fabrics and other accessories. Many designs developed in primitive times are still with us.

### Different types of Patterns

There are four basic types of patterns:

- Geometric
- Floral
- Motif
- Pictorial

Successfully mixing patterns also requires an understanding of scale and density.

#### Geometric Patterns

Stripe- this type of geometric pattern is decorative, yet it can also serve the purpose of deceiving the eye. It is a powerful space manipulation tool. Vertical stripes make a surface appear taller, whereas horizontal stripes create a sense of width. Another example of geometric patterns is a check design. Checks are versatile and can fit within a wide range of settings - both formal and casual. A crisp, clean, tone-on-tone pattern could be perfect for upholstered dining room chairs in a formal setting. Whereas, gingham check could be great for a casual country house setting.



## **Floral Pattern**

This is perhaps the easiest interior design pattern to recognize. As the name suggests, the focus is on flowers of all kinds. A floral pattern provides a soft touch to a design scheme. Even multiple floral patterns can also be used in a design scheme. In which case, you can calm the effect down with the addition of geometric stripes or checks elsewhere in the design scheme.



A floral interior design pattern is especially useful for conveying a sense of historical or period style.

## **Motif Pattern**

In the visual sense, a motif refers to a repeated image. It can be either representational or abstract. Representational designs are based on nature- moon, stars, sun, shells, flowers and the like. In a design scheme, a bathroom may be decorated with pictures of recurring seashell designs. These seashells can either be stencilled randomly, or placed along the top of the wall like a border. A seashell shaped soap dish can also be used on the sink. This is an example of representational motif, in which the designs are based on nature and the images are repeated in the design scheme.

Abstract designs are based on geometrically formed shapes.

A motif interior design scheme can be used to create a strong theme and unity in an overall design concept. A motif can be introduced through fabrics, floorings, wall coverings and accessories.

## **Pictorial Pattern**

A pictorial pattern, though similar to a motif pattern, is more scenic in nature. It can be used to provide themed anchoring to a particular era or style, such as a jungle theme in a child's bedroom.

It can also be used to create a more sophisticated and mature theme, like draperies with images of Greek Urns in a kitchen environment – perhaps tying in with other Greek elements in the space. Another possibility could be fabric depicting an Old

English hunting scene, used on the draperies of an office or den. This will add a masculine and old-fashioned flavour to a space. If you intend to use pictorial interior design pattern, try starting out small. Some throw pillows could be a good starting point.



## Choosing and Buying Patterns

One of the most enjoyable elements of designing and decorating a room is choosing the right mix of patterns and colours. While choosing patterns, consider factors such as scale, colour, tone and content.

- Experiment with mixing and matching: try stripes and checks, stars and stripes.
- Choose two dominant patterns of the same scale and you will find that they fight each other for your attention.
- As general rule, the best results are achieved by planning for the largest areas (walls floors, curtains) to features the largest scale patterns and the smaller areas/items correspondingly smaller patterns.
- Always view patterns from the distance from which it will be viewed in a room. By holding the sample at a suitable distance from a mirror, you will get the right effect.
- Curtain sample patterns are best viewed with some light behind them, rather than facing the light. This will give a good idea of how the material will appear when hung over a window.
- When using several patterns in one room, make sure that they are linked. Choose patterns with colours, themes, motifs or textures in common.
- You can also develop your own patterns, picking up motifs from other elements in a room.
- The simplest way to mix patterns is to choose a decorative pattern first, then co-ordinate a plain or semi-plain fabric in a different scale - all in same colour palette. You can then use combinations of all these fabrics for the window treatment, upholstered furniture and cushions. Consider using a checked fabric for the sofa and then overlaying it with cushions in different combinations of patterns.

## Mixing Patterns

Books in their various covers and designs; the way pictures and prints hang on the wall; the play of light and shade; the shapes of different pieces of furniture - all these form patterns in their own right. A play of patterns can be highly effective and sometimes enriches the whole scheme. When properly used, it will give added depth to the whole room. What's the key to successfully mixing interior patterns? The answer is simple - it depends upon the relationship between density and scale.

### Scale

Scale is how big or small a pattern element is on the wallpaper or on the fabric. This especially has to do with its size – the scale of a large flower is greater than a small rose bud.

### Density

Density is how tightly grouped together the elements of the pattern are. A small rose bud pattern on an open solid coloured background would be less dense than a larger intertwining pattern which shows little, if any background.

So, in this example, the large floral pattern is both larger in scale and denser than the open, smaller rosebud pattern. In order to add sophistication to the overall scheme, you can combine interior patterns of different scale and density - i.e. if you are using floral, you can use a dense and large multi-floral pattern on the throw pillows resting on a textural sofa of a solid colour. When working with interior design patterns, keep in mind the overall colour scheme. The elements of design work best when brought together - not used independently.

Stripes and checks can be the easiest patterns to work with, as they work well alone or with any of the other pattern families.

## Using Patterns Successfully

A successful room scheme includes not only colour, but also the effective use of patterns combined with textural and tonal contrasts. Like colours, patterns can also help to create feelings – they can calm you or they can excite/entice you - drawing you into the room. Patterns can also change the perception of space and can even suggest a modern or period look. Bold patterns work like warm colours - they tend to advance (appear to be coming towards you) Therefore, they work best in large and cold spaces. Small patterns are like cool, pale colours - they tend to recede (seem to move away from you) This way, they create an impression of space, and can be used effectively in small spaces. However, very small mini-prints tend to fade into insignificance if used over a large area. To avoid this happening, you can go for an interesting texture rather than a design.

The use of pattern can also set a specific style, either a period or modern style. The right choice of pattern and colour can enhance the architectural features of a room.

When choosing a pattern, think about its design and scale, and the surface on which you will use it. Heavily patterned curtains and bold carpet designs can be dominant. Patterned curtains can be effective against plain walls. If you want the window to blend in with rest of the décor in the room, choose curtains that co-ordinate with the wall coverings.

### **Taking Care**

There are certain areas in the home where overly strong patterns should be avoided. Like on kitchen work surfaces, for example, where they can cause eye strain. Wall tiles in bathrooms and in kitchens need careful selection too - bold patterns can become irritating.

### **Texture**

Texture is a key element for making a space interesting and inviting. Textural depth can be created by mixing items of different textures in a design scheme.

A room without texture, even if nicely composed, looks flat and boring. Imagine a smooth glass tube, a tactile waffle weave throw, a luxurious chenille drapery panel, a shiny lacquered cabinet - all these when included in a scheme will move the eyes around the room, in order to take in all the details.

Textural juxtaposition is a critical element to overall success in any interior environment, but becomes even more powerful in a monochromatic scheme.

Visual texture can be perceived as warm or cool, similar to colour. For example, a glass table would evoke cool qualities because of its clarity and smoothness, when compared to a cross-section tree trunk that is playing the role of a unique end table. Mixing warm and cool textures in a space can make it more sophisticated. The eye is drawn from one detail to another. Focusing texture to one side of the temperature spectrum can also create a sense of harmony.

Texture in fabrics emphasize mood within a room. A grand dining room is synonymous with velvet, brocade, paisley and taffeta, whereas a romantic bedroom brings to mind voile, lightweight cotton and ribbon trims. Texture can be used to create the smart townhouse look of smooth linen and suede. Every fabric you choose has textural significance, so be aware of how you can use this to add another layer of interest to a room. This applies not only to foundation fabrics, but also to smaller items - denim cushions embellished with wooden buttons are the perfect addition to a relaxed family room, whereas cashmere cushions trimmed with satin look sensational on a leather club chair.



## Colour and Texture

Surface textures also affect the way we perceive a colour – many textures absorb light, some reflect it, others filter and diffuse light. Sometimes, the same colour can appear quite different, depending on the way the surface reacts to light.

This is another reason why you need to look at fabrics and paints samples under the lighting conditions in which they will actually be seen.

Many people think of texture as a purely raised, rough or sculptured surfaces. In reality, all surfaces have a texture. Even if perfectly smooth, such as in the case of plastered walls painted with matt emulsion paint, there's still a texture to consider. This texture absorbs light slightly, making a colour look weaker. The same colour on a shiny surface, such as gloss paint, silk fabric, glazed tiles etc, will look brighter and stronger, as the light is bounced back.

The rough textures of exposed brick or stone walls, planks of wood, natural flooring and coarsely woven textiles absorb light, and therefore make the colour appear darker, richer or in some cases duller. Light diffusing textures such as sheer muslin, voile fabrics, allow the light to pass through, making the colour appear softer and more delicate. Heavily textured items can create quite interesting effects. Because of their uneven surface, light is reflected, absorbed and reflected differently across their surface, resulting in varying values of colour. You can use this in a room where you want to add an extra visual element.

Texture can also work like colour to bring surfaces forward, or give the impression that they are further away. For example, shiny and silky textures - glass, brass and chrome - seem to come towards you. By contrast, rougher, soft and light absorbing textures - velvet, tweed and jute – do the opposite and seem to move away from you. As a result, the colour of highly glazed ceramic tiles stands out much more than the same colour would on a bath towel.

## Setting a Style Through Textures

Texture can also help to set the style of a room. For example, some textures are definitely more traditional and are suitable for decorating period rooms. Brass, velvet, brocades, lace and feathery ferns all have a period feel, while chrome, brushed

aluminium, black ash and slatted venetian blinds all have a more modern look. Some textures, however, such as brick and stone and leather, are considered timeless. It is therefore the way they are used that determines their visual impact and appeal.

It is very important to achieve textural balance when selecting materials. This means choosing a variety of textures within a scheme, which will appropriately complement and contrast with each other, while at the same time relating to the overall style of the room.

### **Softening Texture**

Shiny textures are often too busy and stimulating, and can therefore be unappealing if too many are used in a room. This is often seen in the bathrooms and kitchens, where you can get away with brighter and shinier surfaces. A calmer feel can be created by balancing shiny textures with soft and delicate light filtering textures. Rough textures can also be very harsh - you can soften them by using light filtering surfaces. Softer and light absorbing textures sometimes appear claustrophobic, especially if they are used on a dark coloured surface. They tend to look more effective if contrasted with silks, or other shiny and light diffusing textures.

### **Textural Contrasts**

Think about different textures and you will see that it is possible to feel them through the mind's eye. Pick out some of them and imagine how they would look when appropriately distributed across the walls, ceilings, floors and furniture of a room. Contrast their qualities, weigh up their surfaces and juxtapose them in your mind. Rough can easily go with smooth and matt with gloss - but what rough with what smooth, and which matt with which gloss? These are the important questions of taste and situation the designer needs to answer.

### **Further Reading:**

- ✓ *Elements of Design, (2014) By Erin Gates*
- ✓ *Professional Practice for Interior Designers,(2011) By Christine M. Piotrowski*