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Master bedroom planning

The master bedroom is so often an afterthought. And yet with a little thought to its layout and a list of your wishes, your bedroom can stop being low priority and start being the stuff of dreams

The master bedroom: the spot you can escape to at the end of the day and a quiet space in which to find solace. It's also a room where you can really go to town, putting all those individual touches down, the ones that you might not feel brave enough to express in the more public areas of your home.

Get the layout right

Obviously the floorplan for your master bedroom should be tailored to the space you have to work with, but there are certain things that all of us can bear in mind when planning the space.

Start with the essentials — a bed and bedside storage space, and build out from there. Hanging clothes storage is another must for the majority, as is a chest of drawers. Beyond that, feel free to play with the space you have on offer.

While the general feeling is that beds, being the most dominant piece of furniture in the room, should be placed centrally, if this is just not a layout that suits your bedroom, then don't feel it is

your only option. It is undeniably preferable to be able to access and exit a bed made for two from both sides, however, so try to avoid placing the bed right up against a wall.



ABOVE: Bold colours, combined with lighter tones and natural materials, such as this rattan bed from **The French Bedroom Company** (www.frenchbedroomcompany.co.uk),

create an opulent feel. **BELOW:** The dressing room in this bedroom is separated by a partition wall, with a further curved wall concealing the en suite within.



Small master bedrooms

Don't assume that small bedrooms should mean small furniture — a large statement bed is still a possibility. Look for one with height in the form of a simple four-poster or a tall headboard — this draws the eye upwards, away from the small proportions of the room.

Keep the colour scheme blended. While a bold feature wall might be tempting, a big block of colour can overwhelm a small space. Shades that melt into one another create an easy visual flow, however.

Don't obscure natural light and aim to make the most of daylight through the use of strategically placed mirrors.



TOP: Draw the eye away from the small proportions of a room by using a bed with height, such as this simple four-poster from www.naturalbedcompany.co.uk.

ABOVE: For a sense of luxury, the sliding folding doors separating this en suite can be opened right up to create an open plan feel — revealing the freestanding bath; the shower is hidden.

Getting the en suite right

The en suite, once the epitome of luxury, is now a given. It is, without doubt, hugely convenient to have the bathroom easily accessible from the bedroom. And it makes stumbling half-asleep down the landing, tip-toeing to avoid waking the rest of the household, a thing of the past.

However, don't copy the mass house developers and shoe-horn one in if you just don't have adequate space. There is nothing luxurious about resting your head on your goose-down pillow only to lie facing a toilet.

Likewise, a small 600 x 600mm shower cubicle will make manoeuvring difficult — all for the sake of having to walk down the landing for a proper shower in the morning.

In order for an en suite

bathroom to work well, there needs to be some careful thought given to its placement and proportions.

Ideally, the en suite needs some form of segregation from the rest of the bedroom. Where the space is available, entering the master bedroom suite via a lobby with two doors, one leading to the en suite, another to the bedroom, all of which can be neatly closed off, is a great solution.

Alternatively, separating the en suite from the sleeping area through a dressing room works brilliantly. Once again, this is a layout that will need to be planned from the off.

But if you just don't have the space to include a lobby or dressing room, placing the door to the en suite well away from the bedhead is often the best that you can do.

Luxury in symmetry

ASHISH CHAWLA, Director of Duke of Design The bedroom should be a place of solitude where you can shut the world out. It should be an escape from reality, filled with items that calm, inspire and energise.

Firstly, forget any preconceived notions of what a bedroom should look like. There are only a few rules you should follow.

We firmly believe in 'luxury in symmetry'. It has been scientifically proven that symmetry is pleasing and relaxing to humans. Most people explain it by saying, "It just feels right." That's because we are surrounded by symmetry in nature and even on our own bodies.

The bed should be in the centre of the wall (see below). Try placing any dressing tables or cabinets opposite to the bed.



Master bedroom storage solutions

The bedroom is somewhere to create a sense of calm and relaxation and therefore the last thing you want is to be surrounded by clutter strewn all over the place, which is why good storage is so important.

Think about what you need to find a place for — clothes, shoes, toiletries, bedding?

Providing a space for drinks, reading material and other bits and bobs you want close to hand is also a must for many people. Bedside tables are the solution most often used for this and if you can find models that incorporate shelving, drawers or cupboards, all the better. If you want to keep the floor space next to the bed clear (for space reasons, perhaps, or for a more

minimalist look) opt for wall-hung shelves instead.

In terms of clothes storage you have several options. Freestanding wardrobes are easy to come by and available in all sizes and to suit all budgets, but depending on the proportions of the room, don't always suit. In this case, built-in clothes storage is a better choice and can often be custom-designed to exactly slot into the space you have available (above), perhaps within an alcove, either side of a chimney breast or beneath a sloping ceiling.

Other good bedroom storage solutions include chests of drawers, ottomans and chests (both of which can double up as bedside tables where space is at a premium). Beds with storage underneath are a great idea for housing bulky bedding.





Lighting a bedroom

Never underestimate the importance of a good lighting plan — it really will make or break the space.

All bedrooms should have more than one light source. Think about how you can incorporate a combination of table and floor lamps, ceiling fixtures, recessed spots, and give thought to mood lighting, too.

If you don't have the space on your bedside table or shelf, consider hanging low-level pendants either side of the bed (above) or fit wall lights to either side of the headboard.

Don't shun the central pendant either — although it has

fallen from favour recently, the bedroom is one space that it can pack a real punch — consider a showy chandelier or a statement light shade. This can work particularly well in small spaces where it provides a distraction from the constrained proportions.

Rooms with beams or sloping ceilings suit directional spotlights which really work to bring out the character of quirky forms.

For a little accent or mood lighting, recessed lights within alcoves or LED strip lights behind or beneath furniture provide a soft glow.

Use dimmers to play with the light levels depending on the required mood. **H**

Organisation is key

Barry Sawyer, Director, of Breyer Bespoke Design

For a dressing room effect, add full-length mirrors inside the far left and right doors of your wardrobes so that when you open both you'll be able to check your reflection and your outfit, front and back. Inside organisation should be the focus.



LEFT: "When choosing lamps make sure you see them turned on and look at how the light is emitted. Is it all directed down (great for task lighting) or is it thrown out at 360° (great for brightening dark corners)?" says Ellie Coombs, MD of Nulty (www.nultylighting.co.uk).

Colour schemes

Helen Shaw, Marketing Director of Benjamin Moore UK

Think about whether you're looking for a boost to wake up, or a cocoon to encourage relaxation. Consider these basic facts: warm colours add energy; cool hues create a calming atmosphere; saturated colour wraps you in a cosy environment, while pale shades conjure an airy feel. Try pulling a hue from a favourite fabric for a wall colour that helps you achieve your design goals.

The bedroom ceiling colour is the last you see before you close your eyes, so pick a pretty colour. A lighter shade of the wall colour makes a room feel open with no contrast.

BELOW: "When selecting colours that will help you unwind, neutrals are a natural choice — but they need not be boring. Creamy whites, soft greys and warm amber hues (below) can be used to create a quiet backdrop for colourful furnishings," says Helen Shaw of Benjamin Moore UK (www.benjaminmoore.com).

