



**LEFT** Efficiency is all-important in the kitchen, so even if the room is small, it makes sense to incorporate generously sized appliances and compromise on storage. Pans and plates can be stacked on open shelves, but a full-size dishwasher is an absolute essential.

**BELOW AND OPPOSITE:** In a corridor-style kitchen, even the smallest table makes the room user-friendly for kids, too. If there's no space for a freestanding piece, consider a built-in tabletop squeezed into an alcove with stools neatly tucked beneath.

Do use color in the kitchen. Children respond instinctively to it and will find a kitchen with a tangerine-painted wall or leaf-green rubber floor much more fun to spend time in. Color also lends instant atmosphere. If you're a white-and-stainless-steel fan, think instead of using colorful accessories. Cheerful shades may also help to "zone" the areas within a very large space.

When kids are around, it pays to choose practical, wipe-clean cabinet doors. For trendy minimalists, white or colored laminates, stainless steel, sand-blasted glass, and spray-painted board are all great door options. A more classic look, as good with country as with trendy furniture, is achieved with painted tongue-and-groove or paneled wood. Invest in a quality work surface, since it needs to withstand lots of wear and tear. Stainless steel and solid wood look all the better for a few scuffs, while granite and marble provide a sleeker finish. And Corian, while expensive, is incredibly hard-wearing and comes in myriad colors. Less costly options include concrete and laminates.



vanity unit. Where do all the lotions and potions go? Allow the family one shelf above the basins for everyday bottles, from cleanser to aftershave, and wall-mount glasses, so small kids don't knock them over. Then insist that all remaining clutter is stowed away. Allocate an individual shelf or cupboard to each family member. A row of medicine-style cabinets or lockers looks trendy and neat. Inside one large cupboard, smaller containers can hold everything from hairbrushes to soaps. Don't forget a big laundry bin, and locate it in an obvious place, so kids actually use it.

When planning a bathroom from scratch, draw a floor plan to scale and move around cutouts of proposed sanitaryware. It's the only way to assure a free-flowing layout, allowing quick access to the toilet and basins in the morning. It will also help you make design choices. For example, if there's no room for a hinged shower door, plan a stationary sand-blasted screen. If possible, position the bathtub centrally rather than against the wall. It's easier to get at slippery small children, and may create a free corner where a chair can go.

When it comes to sanitaryware, nothing beats a big bathtub. Smaller siblings can share bathtime, and grown-ups enjoy the luxury, too. Cast-iron styles often come in extra-deep or long proportions, and traditional rolltop tubs are generously sized. Choose bath sides that won't spoil if splashed, such as painted board, laminate, or sand-blasted glass lit from within with colored lights. Centrally sited mixer

**OPPOSITE, TOP ROW:** A traditional style of sanitaryware, teamed with a classic all-white scheme, makes the perfect family choice. It can be dressed up with pretty chandeliers, antique mirrors, or giant scented candles to suit grown-ups, but looks equally at home furnished with kids' bathtime toys, or a distressed wooden stool for little ones to reach the basin.

**OPPOSITE, BOTTOM ROW:** Don't despair if the family bathroom is tiny. Look for fixtures that can double

up, from a combined radiator and towel rod to a basin inset into a storage unit. If you have a family of teenagers, is a tub essential? A great power shower, which takes up less room, may be a better alternative. **BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT:** Choose faucets and fixtures with practicality in mind. A generous-sized spout will fill a tub quicker than two conventional ones, while basin mixer faucets reduce the likelihood of younger kids scalding their hands.





OPPOSITE, ABOVE, AND BELOW:  
In a one-level apartment,  
or a double drawing room  
where two rooms have  
been knocked into one,  
combining a comfortable  
living area with a dining-  
room is a sociable  
arrangement. Grown-ups  
can chat over dinner, while  
the kids chill out with the  
TV. It's vital to be able to  
separate each area, so  
double doors or sliding  
screens should be installed.  
THIS PAGE: Alternatively, you  
could plan a more formal  
seating arrangement at one  
end of the room and a cozy  
area at the other, complete  
with squishy armchairs and  
wall-to-wall books, videos,  
magazines, and CDs.





**OPPOSITE AND ABOVE:** In a traditional playroom, keep things simple, with white walls and wooden floors, and let the toys—dolls' things, cars and trucks—create the decorative impact. Allow kids the creative freedom to display everything from their favorite paintings to postcards, memorabilia, or photos. Allocate wall space or special shelves or provide a few bowls for favorite things to be grouped together.

**LEFT:** Invest in a large armoire into which everything can be cleared away. It could also be wired to hold the playroom TV and videos.



**RIGHT AND OPPOSITE:** A custom-built bed maximizes space in a small room and adds quirky charm. And little children are less likely to fall out of beds that are boxed in (opposite) or have high sides. Sketch a style or amass tear-sheets, then get a carpenter to build a simple frame and paint it in a jolly shade. Storage can be incorporated in the form of underbed drawers, or consider a platform bed with low cupboards beneath. Younger children will always appreciate a bed tucked against the wall or into a corner for added security.



busy kids can hang up clothes quickly if they don't make it to the closet. Teenagers may prefer a chrome, shop-style hanging rack or a low, denim-covered storage unit in place of a chest of drawers. Kids of every age need easy-access floor-level storage, from plastic crates on castors to metal cans, so shoes and toys can be quickly sorted out and put away.

For babies, the bedroom should be styled as simply as possible. This not only guarantees a tranquil space for sleep, but allows for the child to slowly grow into the room, amassing

possessions along the way. Even at the tiny baby stage, it pays to take a more long-term view when you are kitting out the bedroom. At first, the most essential piece is the crib, but within two years, along with the changing table, this will be redundant. In contrast, other key basics, including a chest of drawers, plenty of storage or shelves, and a comfortable feeding then reading chair, should last throughout a child's time at home. Look out for funky extras to please preschool toddlers, such as a miniature table and chairs or a blow-up armchair.





How do you want storage to look? In rooms where you entertain, or want to feel peaceful, always have cabinet doors, so it doesn't matter if there's chaos lurking within. Flush-fitting doors painted or wallpapered to match walls will discreetly disappear, especially if they have invisible touch catches. For contrast, consider stainless steel, laminates, or gloss-painted board, or in traditional homes, paneled door fronts. In playrooms or utility zones, open shelves or wall-mounted cube storage are ideal since they provide instant access for kids. Keep them neat by using stylish containers in wicker, cardboard, or plastic.

If moving into a new house, don't rip out existing storage just because it looks dated. The original carcasses may be put to good use. Molded doors can be replaced with plastic or sandblasted glass, and shelves made more contemporary with the addition of a thick front edge. If you're staying put in an existing

house and can't afford built-in storage, consider off-the-shelf options. They are inexpensive and available in many finishes, from wood veneers to lacquer. These days, there's an array of unusual door handles that will customize cabinets further, but pick chunky versions if there are small kids around.

Not everyone wants sleek built-in storage. Freestanding pieces can move home with you, and have the potential to shift from one room to another as family needs alter. Regular furniture can also be customized. A beautiful armoire will be more user-friendly if it has many shelves, instead of a high hanging rod, while a low retro-style drinks cabinet could conceal the video. Kids will enjoy foraging in secondhand stores for a chest of drawers or bureau that they can paint and customize for their room. Also consider inexpensive chain-store storage options, from a TV cabinet to shoe cupboards. And get inventive with





pieces in robust materials like wood or painted board, rather than plastic (which will scratch) or glass (too many sharp corners). Distressed secondhand antiques, rather than rare and precious ones, are also preferable. If smaller children are around, think about safety. Tiny occasional tables can go flying, as can floor lamps and floor-standing glass vases.

Every living room needs storage. Make a list of what needs to live here, from books and videos to photo albums and board games. For the most serene mood, pick storage with doors that conceal clutter. If the room is contemporary, consider a freestanding cabinet or flush wall units, or if traditional, a bureau teamed with paneled alcove cupboards. Help kids keep things neat by filling each piece of storage with smaller labeled boxes. Books are essential in the living room, providing stimulus for children and creating instant ambience for everyone.



versions, get a carpenter to create a simple design in wood, then paint to match the décor. Good lighting is essential. Inserting a skylight above the stairwell can flood it with light. Side lights, on a dimmer, at intervals on the stairs, will provide a welcome home to late-arriving teenagers. Low-voltage lights inset at ankle height can illuminate treads to a basement kitchen. Consider noise levels. Bare wood or zinc-clad stairs look great, but the clattering of noisy kids will upset neighbors.

Corridors also take a battering, from toddlers on trikes to the indoor roller-blading and football of older kids. Keeping corridors clutter-free makes life safer, and it's more fun for children—why

shouldn't they skateboard indoors? Traditionally, ground-floor corridors double as a space to hang coats, but if the corridor is narrow, hunt elsewhere for a cloakroom. Basement entrances make a good spot, as does the back door area. Put up pegs and a storage unit, so each child has a place to stow his gear. Cylindrical containers can house baseballs or tennis racquets, while rubber or galvanized troughs can hold outdoor shoes.

Decoratively speaking, easy-care practical surfaces are the key to good-looking traffic areas. However strict you are with the kids, small children always go upstairs with jammy hands trailing the wall, and boys inevitably kick a football around before





**ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT:** Storage must fit in with your decorative style, so if your look is more traditional, pick simple mirrored or paneled freestanding armoires. Rethinking the way you use classic pieces. A large armoire might do better service as a toy cupboard in the kitchen, rather than cluttering up a bedroom, while a chest of drawers on a roomy landing can house extra bedding.

**LEFT:** Experiment with the levels of shelving or open storage, especially in a small space. Shelves can

be run around a room at ceiling height, hung below a window, or floor-mounted.

**OPPOSITE, LEFT AND RIGHT:** Tall, thin shelving units can serve kids' and adults' needs alike. Dangerous or precious items that you'd rather small children didn't reach, or infrequently used toys and books, can be stored well out of the way, while lower shelves are devoted to everyday necessities. A library ladder can be a fun addition for accessing very tall shelves.



BELOW LEFT AND OPPOSITE, RIGHT: In a big hall, one or two key pieces will set the decorative tone, but they must be practical, too. A bench or upholstered sofa is useful for school stuff, while a narrow hall table will hold all the paraphernalia. BELOW RIGHT AND OPPOSITE, LEFT: Putting built-in cabinets in an already narrow corridor hall may not be an obvious option, but the resulting storage will keep the precious remaining space clear.

