

The background image is a photograph of a modern living room. On the right, a vibrant red velvet armchair with dark wooden legs sits on a teal and white patterned rug. A large, light-colored cushion with a floral and bird pattern is propped against the back of the chair. To the left of the chair, a bright yellow adjustable desk lamp stands on the rug. Behind the lamp, a stack of books is visible. To the left of the books, a large, clear glass fishbowl filled with water and gold-colored decorative stones sits on the rug. In the background, a white open shelving unit holds various decorative items, including vases and small figurines. A brick pillar is visible behind the lamp and books. The overall aesthetic is contemporary and cozy.

Making a House YOUR HOME

The Essential Guide to
Modern Day Homemaking

Clare Nolan
Lifestyle Editor, YOU Magazine

Making a good first impression

The hallway is the first room you see every day when you arrive home and it's also the first room your guests see. But all too often, its decoration is overlooked. You should therefore design and decorate this space with as much thought as you would any other room.

THE DÉCOR

The hallway and landings (if you have them) link together all the other areas of your home. Decide whether you want to treat them as a neutral space with minimal decoration that quietly takes you from one room, or as a space that stands out as a statement on its own terms – an area of colour and pattern – that then leads you to a calmer space in another room.

THE LIGHTING

Stairs need to be adequately lit plus you need to be able to reach into any hall cupboard and see exactly what's inside. The hallway though can also be a prime candidate for ambient lighting (see page 127). The minute you place a table lamp giving off a warm glow in the hallway, it immediately makes your home look and feel inviting.

The hallway is also the place to add a statement pendant light fitting. Even if you haven't got space for anything else in the hall, you'll probably have room for a decorative light fitting. Choose one that looks good from all angles, including from the top of the stairs.

HALLWAY 'VIEWS'

Many doors connect to and from a hallway or landing. While the view from the front door is probably the most important, and the one we all think of first, there are others to consider too. Think about the view out to the hallway from inside the lounge, or the 'look through' from an open-plan kitchen diner. Try your best to create a pleasing view, perhaps by using a strategically placed artwork or papering a section of a wall. Think about the view from the stairs too. As you look down, is there something beautiful to attract your eye, such as a statement light fitting or an unusual dainty table?

MAKING THE HALL FEEL BIGGER

Hallways and landings are often narrow, tight and dark spaces. Choosing a light neutral colour for the walls and floor will help to make them feel more roomy, as will framing artwork in light-coloured frames. In a really tight space, opt for narrow picture frames that project from the wall – every little extra space counts.



Mirrors are your best friends in a narrow hallway; they trick the eye into believing the space is much bigger. Choose the largest wall-hung mirror that you can fit in or even consider removing the skirting boards and covering one whole wall with a floor-to-ceiling mirror.

FRAGRANCE AND FLOWERS

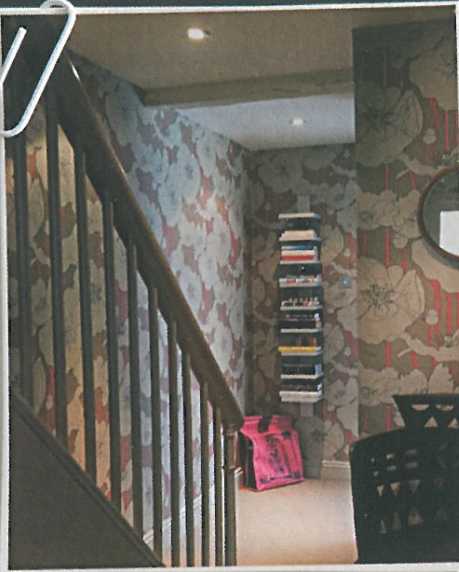
The hallway offers an opportunity to say 'welcome', create a certain mood or set the scene for a party through your use of fragrance and flowers. Warming scents, such as spicy florals and vanilla are inviting – a room diffuser or spray is best, as it's not a good idea to leave candles or oil burners unattended.

A vase of flowers is always a lovely touch. If you do fake flowers, the hallway is the place for them. People don't tend to eye things up for too long in the hall; they would have moved on to the living room or the kitchen before they have realised the flowers are fake. But for the illusion to work, do keep the fakes seasonal.

SOFTENING IT UP

A doormat is a practical addition to any hall. If you haven't got sufficient clearance between the door and the floor for a traditional brush mat, try a flat-weave runner as an alternative. Choose one that can be thrown in the washing machine so it's easy to maintain. Any rugs and runners need to be well secured, so use a non-slip mat underneath. If you have particularly cold winters, think about fitting a door curtain made from a thick heavy fabric; I'm always amazed at just how much warmer the hall is with one of these curtains. There's also something quite special about being able to draw the curtains on the outside world for the night.

* WAYS TO ADD INTEREST TO A HALLWAY



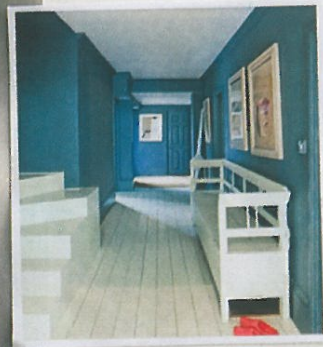
WALLPAPER

Is there a pattern you love but aren't brave enough to use in the living room or bedroom? Think about using it in the hallway instead. You'll still get the pleasure of seeing it, and it will be much easier to live with in a space that you generally use to pass through.



ACCESSORIZE

Bring in a large wall hung mirror and an ornate chandelier to add a decorative touch if there isn't room for furniture.



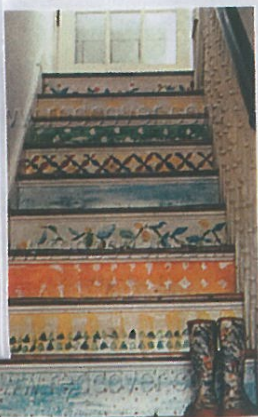
PAINT

A strong wall colour gives the hall its own identity. Painting the floors white prevents the space from being too dark.



A CARPET RUNNER

Patterned or plain, it's the simplest way to make a statement.



PATTERNED RISERS

Make a feature of the risers (the uprights) by painting them with a pattern or a simple decorative motif. Wallpaper can also be used just as effectively.



A RIBBON OF COLOUR

Use floor paint to create a faux runner on uncarpeted stairs. This should be done with great precision so it reads well to the eye.



Getting organised

The trick to having a kitchen that functions properly, without clutter or stress, is order and organisation. Arrange your storage in a way that works well for you.

THE BIG DE-CLUTTER

Make an inventory of your kitchen kit – the waffle maker, the pineapple slicer, the electric carving knife, the baking kit, plates and glasses – everything. Get rid of things you don't use. Be brutal.

RANK BY USE

Organise what you're left with into everyday, regularly used and seldom-used items. You want the everyday items in easily reached places and seldom-used things kept higher up or at the backs of cupboards. Move things that only come out once or twice a year, or are very season-led, to another part of the house. Giant-size turkey

platters, picnicware, thermos flasks, and preserving pans can all live in the garage or attic until they're needed.

CUSTOMISE

Customise the space inside drawers and cupboards. Use drawer tidies or small baskets to divide large drawers, and larger baskets or extra shelves in cupboards spaced exactly to suit a set of glasses or a row of storage jars.

STORE, PREP, COOK, EAT, CLEAN

Think of the key functions and where they take place. Position the items needed for each as close as you can to that area. Spices near the cooker, plates near the dishwasher and sink, tea and coffee, cups and teapots near the kettle.

LESS IS MORE

The less you have on display, the bigger the kitchen will look. Unless something is a thing of beauty or is used a few times a week, store it out of sight. I like to keep some things handy for cooking and cleaning though; a collection of cooking oils (the ones I use daily, not all of them), plus salt and pepper by the cooker, and some basic cleaning items by the sink.



THE PROJECT:

A chalkboard

The kitchen often acts a family organisational hub. Go one step beyond having a calendar pinned to the wall to keep the family on track and instead have a chalkboard wall for making notes, writing shopping lists and highlighting diary dates. Use blackboard paint to paint the area you want. Your chalkboard will look much more impressive when it's wall-to-wall and floor-to-ceiling.

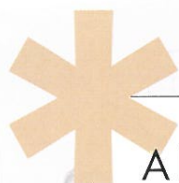
HOW TO:

- * First, prepare the surface. If it's already painted with matt emulsion, you need do no more than apply the blackboard paint with a brush or roller. If you're painting on top of vinyl paint, wood or metal, you'll need to prepare the surface first with a couple of coats of the appropriate primer.
- * Apply at least three coats for the best possible finish. Allowing them to dry between coats.
- * This paint can be quite gloopy, make sure you mix it thoroughly before using – otherwise you'll be left with a thick unworkable paint when you come to the bottom of the tin.

*Keep everyday cooking essentials handy by the cooker. Using a large tile, a tray, a platter or a chopping board means there's a home for them to go back to and it'll stay looking tidy.

Why it works: The luxury ensuite

So many of us have sliced off a part of a bedroom to create a shower room or sacrificed the box room in order to give ourselves the luxury of our own bathing space, but there's also the option of putting the bath in your bedroom. Dream a little....



A bath in the bedroom

- * It's perfectly feasible to install a bath within a reasonably sized bedroom, as it's not that difficult to extend the plumbing from an existing bathroom elsewhere in the home.
- * Choose a bath you love – it will be a focal point of the room.
- * Think about storage right from the start. A small table beside the bath will be enough for a few bottles of bath oil, soaps or a glass of wine. A nearby cupboard can be used to house towels.
- * You'll also need a supersized floor mat to catch splashes.



THE DRESSING AREA

Neither the bathroom nor the dressing area takes over in this dual-function room. None of the clutter of the dressing area can be viewed whilst bathing. The aged finish on the bath means it fades into the background and almost looks like a piece of furniture rather than a bath.





ROOM FOR TWO

A double-ended bath with taps mounted in the middle means there's room for two comfortably. Avoid shower attachments – they are too risky in a bedroom environment

THE FEEL

Function is replaced with luxury. This room doesn't feel like a 'bathroom'. Practicality isn't at the forefront of its design. Imagine taking a bath here by candlelight with a lighted fire in the grate....

THE LIGHT

The folding screen at the window provides privacy during the day while still allowing plenty of light to flood in. It also adds another decorative layer to the room. The integral wooden shutters give complete privacy when needed. Spots in the ceiling are on dimmers, to provide subtle lighting during the evening.

THE PRACTICALITIES

Putting a bath in a large room like this, with high ceilings and windows that open easily, means there shouldn't be problems with damp. It would be a different story if you were using it for power showers each morning.

THE FURNITURE

Accessories and furniture – a luxury wool rug, a coffee table, a pair of chairs to invite bathside chats – are all unexpected in a 'bathroom'.