

MEASURING...The Golden Rule of Design

By: Terrence L. Clayton

An often overlooked "simple" step when moving into a new home or even buying for an existing home, is measuring! Having worked in a furniture design center, I've heard all too often, "Oh, I know it will fit!" Clients would come into the store, and choose a piece of furniture without considering how it will fit in their home.

In most cases, furniture appears smaller than they actually are. People don't take into consideration the hugeness of the store. While most fine furniture stores offer "In home service", many clients are under the assumption that once the salesperson is in their home, they will be pressured into spending more than they actually want to. **NEWSFLASH!**... You don't have to give in to them!

One incident I will never forget is, when our delivery drivers called the store and asked, "Why would the salesperson sell them this big sofa when they live in a small mobile home?" The client was offered the "In home service" and declined, also; they also failed to tell the salesperson that they live in a "single wide" mobile home. The delivery drivers couldn't even get the monster sofa through the door. So, much to the client's dismay, they had to pay a "restocking fee", which is a common practice for custom ordered furniture.

Before ever going into a store, you should measure every inch of the room that you are buying for. You should know where every door, window and outlets are. The height of windows and pony-walls are also helpful. Unless you are intending to take advantage of the "In home service," you **need to know** the measurements of the room.

It isn't just furniture, but also lighting and accessories that sometimes are "off" in scale when brought into the home. Chandeliers, many times, have a hanging length restriction. So, if you have unusually high ceilings, take note of the maximum length.

Sometimes, people will buy something as simple as a vase and find it doesn't work where they intended it to go. If you want to place a sculpture, vase, or picture in a niche' and "judge" the size, you may be making another trip to the store to return it.

Measuring is one of the most "helpful" actions you can take to prevent your decorating experience from being a stressful event. Another easy trick is, to use masking tape to mark the floor and see if your design plan works. This will help you to see the "flow" of the room.

If you are an apartment dweller, measurements will help you to know if your purchases will fit in the elevator, around the corners of the stairwell and hallway. The landlord won't be very happy if your "oversized" pieces take chunks out of his walls and woodwork.

A few "Basic" measurement rules to help with your design plan:

Leave at least 36" around tables for the chairs to pull out.

If you want an area rug under your dining area, be sure the chairs do not fall off the edge of the rug (Measure the area with the chairs pulled all the way out.)

There should be at least 18" between a sofa and a cocktail table.

The bottom of artwork over a sofa should hang 8" to 10" above the top of the sofa back. (Remember, you want to look into art, not up at it!)

Chandeliers are usually hung 36" above a table. Also, know the width of the table before purchasing a chandelier.

Something that is never thought of as a measurement is paint. As a rule, one gallon of paint covers 400 square feet. Take into consideration, are you painting a light color over a darker color? In some cases, 2 to 3 coats may be needed. The expert in the paint department should be told so he or she can best estimate the amount of paint you'll need to buy.

So, remember to always measure. Decorating is not a chore, it is a fun and rewarding experience!



Terrence L. Clayton started his designing career creating store displays, stage sets and tradeshow exhibits in 1986. He was asked to create a line of novelty accent furnishings which led him to attend Interior Design school and graduating in 2004. Terrence has been a Las Vegas resident since December 1992 and opened Alternative Décor soon after.

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