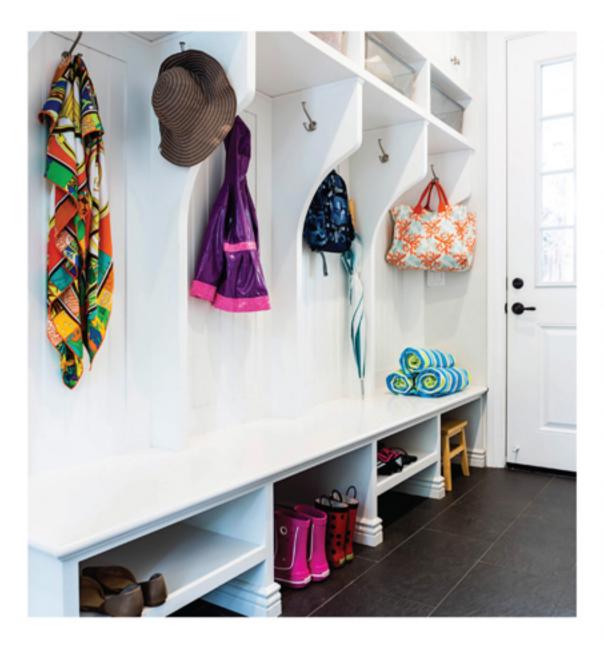


STYLE: DÉCOR



LIVABLE LUXURY

Courtney Thomas, founder of La Cañada-based Courtney Thomas Design, reveals her tips and tricks for designing stylish, family-friendly homes.

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here do you start when designing a family-friendly space?

I start with who and how. Who uses this space most? How old are they and how do they use the space? For family rooms and kitchens, which is often a mixeduse space, we get a lot of input

from parents before setting design direction. For a playroom or kids' bedroom, I like to interview the kids. I use their vision for overall room design or seasonal refreshes and then I make sure to add the

functional elements like layout, storage, and stain-resistant fabrics that give parents peace of mind.

What are your favorite details for a functional yet kid-friendly space?

It's two-fold: I introduce texture with a plush throw blanket or a down- or Trillium-fill pillow and add color or pattern with pillow fabrics or windowseat cushions. For function, I gravitate toward machine-washable coverlets for bedding. I often pick neutral colors for sheets and main bedding to avoid fading and to bleach if needed. I like smart storage like play tables with cubbies and toy bins, or adjustableheight clothing rods to accommodate growing clothing sizes.

What do you enjoy most about designing for your clients?

Our clients don't live in spaces that serve as showrooms. They don't have the "off-limits" living room anymore. They need all their spaces to serve a purpose and want all the pieces in that space to be functional. I love introducing them to the idea of a designed space that aesthetically calms and inspires them while living up to their daily needs.

You describe your style as "livable luxury." What does that mean?

Livable luxury is the counterpoint to the idea that busy families couldn't have a luxurious design aesthetic without sacrificing the functional slant. It was an outgrowth of feeling like I didn't want to sacrifice the look of my home while it endured the roughhouse activities of my kids and our busy daily lives. I didn't want to wait until we made it through our young family stage of life before making a home I felt inspired to be in and proud enough to share with friends.

What are some other ways to incorporate kidfriendly design in one's home?

I love displaying kids' artwork or recent creative projects. It doesn't have to be a large gallery wall of their latest watercolor pieces. It can be a rotating display area: a corkboard, a single shelf on a bookcase, a changeable art frame or clothespins on a piece of twine that hangs art over a desk in their room. I also love incorporating reading nooks in kids' rooms: a window seat with lots of pillows, an oversize reading chair, a bean bag, or a loveseat.