

Chapter 1

Bringing Your Vision to Life

In This Chapter

- ▶ Decorating like a pro on a budget
- ▶ Adding finishing touches and professional flair

A fresh coat of paint for the kitchen, a few throw pillows for the family room, a nice centerpiece for the dining room table . . . how hard can home decorating be? As long as you have a decorating plan, home decorating can be easy and fun. We promise.

So why write an entire book dedicated to the subject? We want to simplify your life by helping you decorate using our quick-and-easy, foolproof approach. You can make some frustrating (and expensive) mistakes if you start your decorating projects without doing your homework. Our friend, HGTV's Chris Casson Madden (host of *Interiors By Design*), calls this book "a must-read" for her staff. That's high praise. Consider this book a really important (and fun!) homework assignment.

Taking the First Steps

So, how do you launch your decorating project? Step one is to make a realistic budget. If that step scares you, turn to Chapter 2 for some helpful pointers.

With a budget in hand, you need to analyze your space. Is it big, small, odd-shaped, or problem-ridden? Brainstorm about the basics: walls, floors, and ceilings. How can you use paint, wallcoverings, and more to create effects? How do you choose the best flooring and the right lighting? Is there any way to dress up a boring ceiling? With all the choices out there, you need a guide to help you decide.

Consider color, patterns, and textures — they need to work together. Color can be tricky to work with. Most people fear using too much or too bold color or bad combinations. Then there's pattern — how do you layer three, four, or more patterns to get the look you want? In this book, you discover that there's nothing to fear, if you understand some very basic decorating rules.

10 Part I: Basic Planning

Take some time to become familiar with different decorating styles, such as Traditional, Country, Modern, Cottage, and so on (see Chapters 9 and 10). Compare the different styles and see if your personal style falls into one of the categories, giving you a leg up with planning.

As you can see, home decorating calls for much more than painting walls a pretty color and buying furniture. Decorating is about making your home comfortable, functional, and great looking.

Decorating All Through the House

From a decorating perspective, two types of rooms exist: the easy ones and the tough ones. Decorating a room that needs only pretty furniture in order to feel complete is relatively *easy*. Decorating a room that has appliances, equipment, and fixtures and is used frequently is relatively *tough*.

Tackling the toughies

You need decorating know-how to create the three tough rooms: the kitchen, the bathroom, and the home office. You can add lots of extras to these rooms to make them even more functional and more stylish.

Even if you order pizza and Chinese five nights a week, your kitchen is the most lived-in room in your house. You use it for everything from cooking to entertaining, which means it has to meet a variety of needs for a variety of users. The hearth of the home truly has very special decorating needs.

Just because a room is functional doesn't mean it should be bare-bones basic. The bath — no matter what its size — has morphed into a spa. Whether your bathroom is small or large, turn it into an oasis of comfort.

More and more of us are working out of our homes these days. Your home office (or library or study) needs professional-level function and style. You need solutions that work for you when you go to work!

Fixing up the easies

The bedroom, living room, family room, and other lively places fall into the easy decorating category. They are not without challenges, though.

You spend a third of your life sleeping. Select your bedroom's look while keeping in mind function, fun, and style. You'll make different design choices if you're decorating bedrooms for children and guests.

Your living room is a public room that's also very personal. You want your living room to be a comfortable, relaxing room with maximum style.

Entertaining at home is bigger than ever. Having people over for dining, screening your favorite shows, or playing games is the “in” thing. Some people entertain in the kitchen or the living room. No matter what rooms you entertain your friends in, you want a functional and fun look.

Do you have plenty of space? Get more use out of it! Decorate bonus spaces, such as entryways, attics, basements, porches, hallways, balconies, and lofts, in attractive and functional manners that give your home a new look.

Adding Professional Finishing Touches

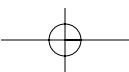
You can take your home decor to a whole new level simply by accessorizing. Accessorizing is what makes rooms in magazines and on TV so pretty. As decorators, we've styled plenty of rooms (both sets and real rooms) for magazines. The right accessories and placement can make or break a room.

As professionals, we've learned some little tips that will help you decorate like a pro:

- ✓ **Be prepared.** Research before you buy. Read instructions on products before using them. Keep tools and paints on hand. (See this book's “Cheat Sheet” for how to create your decorator's bag of tricks.)
- ✓ **Plan the work, work the plan.** Establish stages to keep your decorating projects on time and budget.
- ✓ **Ask for help.** Expert help is available — sometimes for free or cheap. Not every project is a DIY (do-it-yourself). Keep a list of decorators, painters, tilers, electricians, and handymen for times when you need a pro's help.
- ✓ **Shop positively.** Don't bring wet blankets with you on a shopping trip (your mom has her taste, you have yours). Pre-shop for a cranky spouse — pick two or three choices you know you can live with to show to him or her.
- ✓ **Done or just begun?** Never consider your place done! Remain open to change.



Decorating is a gift that we give to ourselves and others. With this book, we help you share the gift of gracious living — with your family, friends, and everyone who comes into your life and home.



12

Part I: Basic Planning

