

Newsday Special Advertising Section

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Furnishings

How to

Purchase a youth bedroom

THE LAST THING PARENTS want to do is refurnish their children's room as often as they buy new clothing for them. So parents should make the room adaptable as the child grows up, designers recommend.

"Avoid the temptation to introduce a juvenile theme, like race-car beds or ballerina table lamps," said Debbie Wiener, owner of Designing Solutions, a Washington, D.C.-based firm. "Themed items are expensive, and your child will probably hate them in just a few years."

While it makes sense to avoid incorporating themes into long-lasting elements of the room, such as the bed, desk or chairs, parents are increasingly using themes for accessories, such as banners, bedspreads, linen and window treatments, said Richard Healy, vice president and general manager of The Place Furniture Gallery, which has stores in Farmingdale and Carle Place, with an upcoming store in Coram.

"Parents are doing the themes as accessories," he said. "That gives you the versatility. It can go with any type of furniture."

Recently, the Disney Cars Bedding Collection, from the Disney movie "Cars," has been popular, Healy said.

Years ago, however, Disney furniture — not just accessories — was all the rage, he said. But now parents are seeking furniture that fits a variety of ages. "Today, people are buying more versatile, more mature furniture that the children can grow up with."

Parents can even save on wallpaper by opting for painted walls and putting the themes elsewhere. A corked wall, for instance, allows children to add their ever-changing tastes, from the heart-throb of the moment to the sports figure of the month, said Melody Davidson, co-owner of Design Yourself Interiors, DIY.

As the child moves on to the next celebrity, the change to the room is as easy as taking out the thumbtack.

For a kid who's into skateboarding, a parent could use skateboards as shelving or install holders for skateboards so they almost become artwork when they're not in use, said Kathy Passarette, owner of Creative Home Expressions, an interior decorating company based in Mount Sinai.

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Whatever furniture parents choose, they should make sure children have a say in the purchase, she said. "As parents, we decorate the rest of our homes the way we want," she said. "Kids spend a lot of time in their rooms, whether it's studying, watching television, reading, and this space should reflect them. I'm not saying to let them have free rein, but guide them. I think this is a great way for kids to find out just what it is they like in terms of furniture and decorating. It also gives them a sense of pride of ownership."

On the other hand, it's the parents who ultimately pay to furnish the room,

so it pays to keep it simple so the child won't outgrow it, designers said.

"If you keep the furniture basic, with clean lines, it should be able to carry them through college age and beyond, and the decor surrounding it may change based on their tastes changing," Passarette said.

While the children might appreciate race cars or ballerinas as part of the accessories, other elements of the room are more practical.

For instance, low bookcases with baskets are good for storing items, including toys, games and stuffed animals. As the child matures, the contents of the bookcases can change.

Also, large slip-covered bean bags can be an alternative to chairs. They're easy to clean and can conform to unusual spaces.

The desk should be spacious enough to accommodate homework from elementary to high school. And the room should be well-lit with floor or ceiling lights to facilitate reading.

And, of course, the bed should be able to handle the ever-so-common sleeper.

Barclay Butera, chief executive of Barclay Butera Inc., a manufacturing and design firm based in Los Angeles and New York, recommends platform beds because they're low and even come with an attached nightstand — no separate furniture for the kids to knock over getting out of bed — and some have an additional mattress underneath that can be pulled over for the child's friend.

A trundle bed is another option for sleepovers. Neither the platform bed nor the trundle bed takes up extra space, as it's stored underneath, and, unlike a bunk bed, the pull-outs don't force the kids to climb up to a second level.

Tips

- Avoid themes for the furniture as you'll end up buying new furniture as the child's tastes change.
- Keep the furniture basic, with clean lines, so it will last even through the college years.
- Use themes as accessories instead — the bedspread, linen or window treatments.
- Low bookcases with baskets are good for storing items, including toys, games and stuffed animals.
- Large slip-covered bean bags can be an alternative to chairs. And they're easy to clean.
- Install a corked wall for a child to post celebrities and sports stars. The corked wall can take the place of the themed furniture or wallpaper.
- Be creative. For a child who's a skateboard enthusiast, make shelving out of a skateboard, or store skateboards by hanging them on the wall, serving as art for the room.
- Let the kids have a say in furnishing the room. It's their place, after all. But give them some guidance.
- Make sure that the room has a spacious desk that will be able to accommodate the amount of homework the child will be doing throughout the high school years.
- Buy a bed that can accommodate the ever-so-popular sleepovers. Platform beds with a pull-out bed underneath or trundle beds are good options.

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