



## ALLYSON'S 5 TIPS FOR UPDATING YOUR LIVING ROOM RIGHT NOW

### Tip # 1 Declutter

This may sound obvious, but please don't skip over this step. Even a perfectly designed and decorated room can benefit from de-cluttering now and then. Without any conscious effort on our part, clutter does seem to magically appear, and it makes a room feel busy and distracting - your eye doesn't know where to settle.

Please remove everything that has no purpose or that you don't enjoy having around. It will breathe new life into your room.

If de-cluttering is a problem for you, as it is for lots of people, including myself at times, take a look at Marie Kondo's book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. It changed my whole attitude towards holding onto stuff. One friend thanked me dearly for telling her about it: "I was easily able to give away 13 bags of stuff in one afternoon, without regret or remorse. Thank you!"

By the way, don't put your cast-offs in storage. If they are still in good condition, give them away on Freecycle, donate them to charity thrift shop, sell them on craigslist, or put them out with the trash if they have reached the end of their useful lives.



## Tip #2 Choose the Focal Point

To figure out how to arrange your living room furniture, first find the focal point in your room, or the area you would like to attract the most attention. A fireplace is an obvious one, but if you don't have a fireplace don't fret, I'll let you in on a little secret: Your sofa wall can be your focal point. It is where you want to direct people's attention when they walk into your room because that is where you want them to gather.

Sometimes it makes sense to float your sofa in the middle of the room, but in an average size living room, more often than not, your sofa will go on the longest wall of the room. Create a u-shape with a pair of chairs flanking the sofa for the ideal conversation area. In a small or narrow space, the pair of chairs may work better facing the sofa.

To turn your sofa into a focal point, add a pair of side tables with a pair of great lamps and a painting or group of art on the wall that takes up at least two-thirds the width of the sofa. You may already have these items in other areas in your home. If you don't have that perfect painting just yet, search out a large mirror as an affordable alternative. You can find them anywhere from a big-box store to a vintage furniture store and everywhere in-between, including online stores.

Or do what one of my savvy clients did. She framed her children's colorful artwork in white Ikea frames that come complete with white mats. They looked like clean, crisp pieces of modern art.



## Tip #3 Adjust Your Rug

Make sure your rug is the right size and is placed where it belongs. How big should your rug be? Ideally, the furniture in the conversation area will all fit on the rug, or at least the front legs of all the pieces will be on the rug. The rug should be centered on the sofa to create a balanced and harmonious effect.

If you already have a rug that's too small, place it in the center of your furniture arrangement for now. You can also layer it on top of a larger seagrass or sisal rug (the ones that look like straw.) These go with everything and will update your room immediately. The layering adds interest while visually expanding the size of your rug!

If you have a rug that's the right size in another room, consider swapping them. It could change your whole look without spending a dime.

## Tip #4 Use Lighting to Warm Up Your Room

Lighting has a major impact on how your living room works as well as how it looks. Even if your ceiling is peppered with recessed lighting, the ambiance in your room will be greatly enhanced with lighting at different levels, by adding table and/or floor lamps. The pool of light cast by a lamp is ideal for reading when the lamp is placed near a chair so it illuminates your book from over your shoulder. These pools of light, when spread around your space, also work to create a warm and inviting atmosphere in your entire room.



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## Tip #4 Lighting continued



Do you have a match to that lamp in your living room now? I often ask clients if they have another lamp to make the pair - and they do. Put them together in your room to create balance and a cohesive look.

A note on light bulbs: thank goodness LED bulbs have become widely available, replacing the unflattering light given off by compact fluorescents. Make sure to check the "color temperature" before you buy. I personally prefer a warm bulb that looks like an incandescent, and those will be marked 2700K. If you prefer a brighter white like a halogen, go up to 3000K, but anything higher than that is much too stark for an interior, in my opinion.

## Tip #5 Style Your Coffee Table



If you don't know what to do with your coffee table, you've come to the right place. Coffee tables are supremely functional. Here's a place to put down your drink and hold your books and magazines. In a room with a TV there's also the remote control, the Roku remote, maybe even one for the DVD player if you still have one. And if you're a more relaxed type, coffee tables are a place to put your feet up.

All this function can also look like chaos. So the objective here is to make your coffee table add style to your living room while also serving its functional purpose.

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## Tip #5 Coffee Table continued

Here's my secret for styling a coffee table. First divide it into equally-sized sections. A rectangular table is three sections, a round or square table is divided into four.

What to fill the sections with? First take all your magazines and pile them together into a tray or shallow basket. Look around the house - you can use that breakfast-in-bed tray you got as a wedding gift, or a tray you use to clear the table or serve drinks on the patio, anything large and oblong to help organize the clutter.

An attractive box or a bowl can be a great place to stash the remotes and then you always know where to find them.

Now show your personality with something decorative such as a pair of candlesticks, a collection of shells or beach rocks in a bowl, a stack of books in a topic you find interesting, or anything you collect. Here you can use trays is to corral smaller pieces into a grouping that helps them feel more like a collection. To liven up a tablescape, add something with life - either a plant or a vase of flowers or a bowl of fruit. It really makes a big difference! Keep it colorful in tones to coordinate with your furnishings for maximum effect.

An oversize square table can often fit a fifth section in the center. Put the tallest item there. Leave a border around the edge for putting down your drink or putting up your feet. Top your stack of books with a pretty decorative object and you're done!

All the best,

*Allyson*

