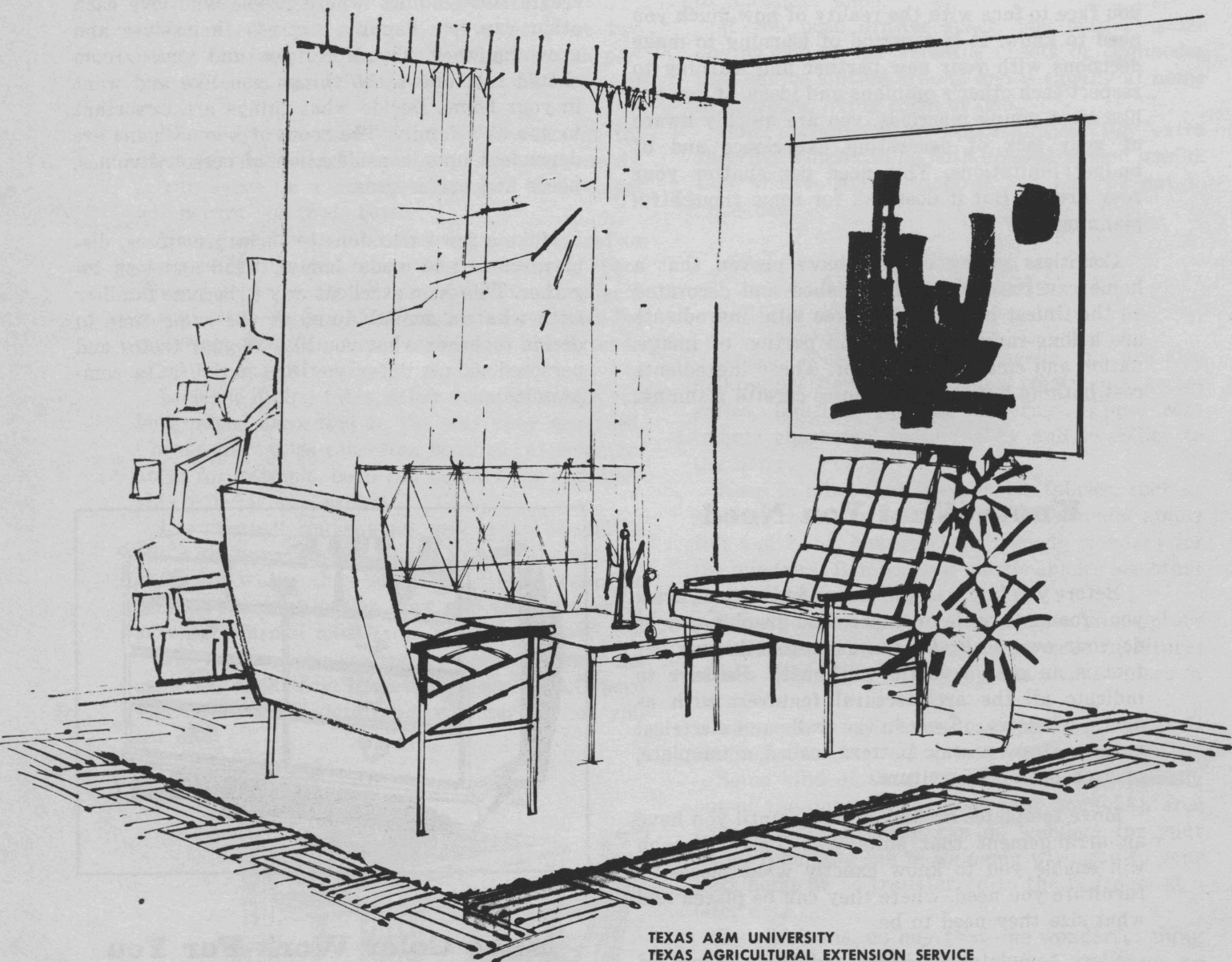


FURNISHING YOUR FIRST HOME



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Marriage and planning your first home go hand in hand. This home may be a small apartment, a rented dwelling, or if you are fortunate you may buy or build. In any event, if you are starting with nothing but the bare walls you will have this decorating problem: to transform hollow, impersonal space into cozy, comfortable rooms that meet the needs of two people for daily living.

This is an exciting challenge and one that brings you face to face with the reality of how much you need to know. It is a period of learning to make decisions with your new partner and learning to respect each other's opinions and ideas. If you are like most young marrieds, you are quickly aware of your lack of decorating experience and of budget limitations. This need not shatter your rosy dream. But it does call for some thoughtful planning.

Countless young couples have proven that a home can be tastefully furnished and decorated on the tiniest budget. The three vital ingredients are a long-range plan, a good portion of imagination and smart use of color. These ingredients cost nothing but they do require careful planning.

Know What You Need

Before you buy a single piece of furniture, draw your rooms to scale on paper. Use graph paper or do your own scale drawing; one-fourth inch per foot is an easy scale to work with. Be sure to indicate all the architectural features, such as doors, windows, offsets in the walls and electrical outlets. Draw a scale pattern, called a template, of each piece of furniture.

Move templates around on paper until you have an arrangement that suits you. This approach will enable you to know exactly what pieces of furniture you need, where they can be placed and what size they need to be.

Place templates of large and basic pieces of furniture first. Add wedding presents and furniture you already have. Then it is easy to decide what pieces you need to buy to complete each room. With this done, list the items of furniture you cannot do without—pieces you must buy first. A second list should include your future needs.

Even couples with ample income would do well to begin cautiously. If selected wisely, many of the first purchases can be the nucleus of furniture chosen for a larger or more elaborate home later on.

Furnishing a home means more than deciding what style of furniture to buy or what color the carpet should be. It provides an opportunity to create surroundings where people who love each other can live happily, express themselves and grow together. Therefore, you and your groom should talk about the things you like and want in your home. Decide what things are important to you as a family. The roots of a good home are dependent upon consideration of personal values, needs and preferences.

Make a few excursions to furniture stores, display rooms and model homes. Read and look together. This is an excellent way to become familiar with what is available and at the same time to decide together what you like. If your tastes and personal values differ you can arrive at a compromise.



Make Color Work For You

Color, more than any other element in a room, can build or destroy the effect you are trying to achieve. You must consider it in your choice of nearly every item of furnishings. Therefore, you need to know how colors affect you, what they

can do for your rooms and how to combine them effectively.

You already know the ABC's of color. Red, yellow and blue are primary colors, from which all other colors are derived. Equal parts of any two of these give the three secondary colors: orange, green, purple. Then a wide range of intermediate colors can be created by varying the ratio of primary colors in the mixture.

Technically, black and white are not colors. However, they have an important function in decorating. Any color with white added becomes lighter, paler; any color with black added becomes darker, quieter.

Keep in mind that reds and yellows are warm colors. They are gay and exciting. On the other hand, blues and greens are considered cool and restful. Intense hues are advancing and command attention. As they are lightened and grayed they become receding and less conspicuous.

If you feel uncertain about color choices for your house, try this simple exercise. Collect a hundred or more samples of all of the colors in a variety of light and dark values and bright and dull intensities. These may be paint chips or small strips cut from magazines, fabrics or any colored materials you have around the house.

Separate them into four groups: the three primary color families—red, yellow, blue and a neutral group. Put black, white and gray into the neutral group, since they may be combined with any color. Look carefully at those you are not sure of and decide what the predominating color is. Beige is sometimes thought of as neutral but it usually belongs in the yellow group as do ivory, eggshell, cream and buff. Work with these samples and learn to recognize color gradations and relationships.

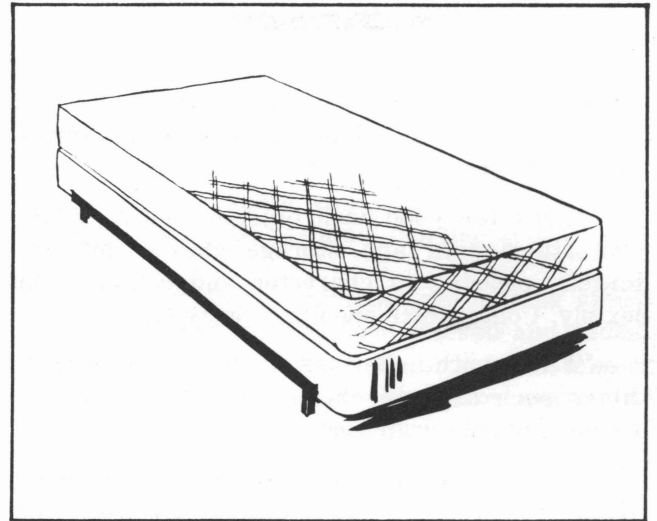
Begin to decide how you would like to combine colors in your rooms. Walls of rooms, including windows and their treatment, doors and fireplaces, are the largest areas of color. Floors and ceilings come next in size, then furniture and accessories. These relationships applied to the use of color suggest:

—Floors moderately dark in value and low in intensity to give stability and to simplify upkeep.

—Walls lighter in value than floors to provide a transition between them and the ceiling and neutral in intensity to keep them as background.

—Ceilings light in value and low in intensity for a sense of spaciousness and efficient reflection of light.

This approach, of course, should be altered according to your particular problems and situa-



tion. Your dominant color is the one that appears most often in the room, muted in large areas, and more intense in small areas. Other colors, if any, are used for variety and contrast.

Some of the experts suggest that you keep these economies in mind as you plan colors for your rooms:

—A coat of paint on one or more walls of a room will change the atmosphere at less cost than any other single device.

—Old, battered, nondescript furniture takes on renewed vitality with new paint.

—A dominance of light-value colors can cut the electric bill and you'll probably see better.

—Warm colors in your home make you feel comfortable at lower, probably more healthful, temperatures.

—Colors that do not fade, or fade gracefully, minimize replacement.

—Nature colors, especially if patterned, not only reduce daily and weekly maintenance but remain good looking longer than do most clear, sharp colors.

—A unified color scheme throughout the house makes for economical mixing-and-matching of furniture, draperies and rugs.

As you begin to put together the colors for each scheme, try to use them in the same proportion that they will be used in the room. For example, background color will represent the largest area and be the largest in size. This will help you to visualize the total effect. It pays big dividends to collect samples of paint, fabrics, wall covers and flooring materials and to carry them with you as you shop.

Buy The Basics First

In spite of wedding presents, if you are like many newlyweds, you will not be able to furnish your first home all at once. You will need to select with extreme care the items you cannot afford to "scrimp" on. For most couples the basics include furniture for sleeping, storage, dining and seating. This usually means a bed, chest of drawers, a comfortable sofa, a man's upholstered chair, a dining table and at least two to four pull-up chairs. These are your first investments. If you have a choice, you will do well to buy a few good things rather than to spread your money thin and have nothing of lasting value.

Basics should not be bought solely for the first apartment but for the larger apartment or house you will move into later. Many pieces of furniture on today's market serve more than one purpose and fit into any room. Therefore, it is wise to do a little crystal ball gazing and try to project 10 to 20 years into the future. You may be wrong, but it is good to start with a long view.

Keep in mind that your goal is to create a background for living that fits the way you plan to live. Once you have a mental picture of your first home and a mutual understanding of your needs and resources, as well as your values and goals, you are ready to think about buying furniture.

Furniture Needs For Sleeping

Bedding should top the list of basics. Bedding experts say \$100 to \$120 will buy a good set of standard mattress and springs. Twin beds will cost twice as much. Extra large beds cost more and also necessitate extra-size linens. A difference of \$2 per sheet can strain the limited furnishings budget.

A headboard is not a must for a good night's sleep and may be purchased at a later date. In fact, you can practice economy and ingenuity by designing your own. If you have not made up your mind about style, this approach will leave you a free choice of design should you decide to purchase a headboard later.

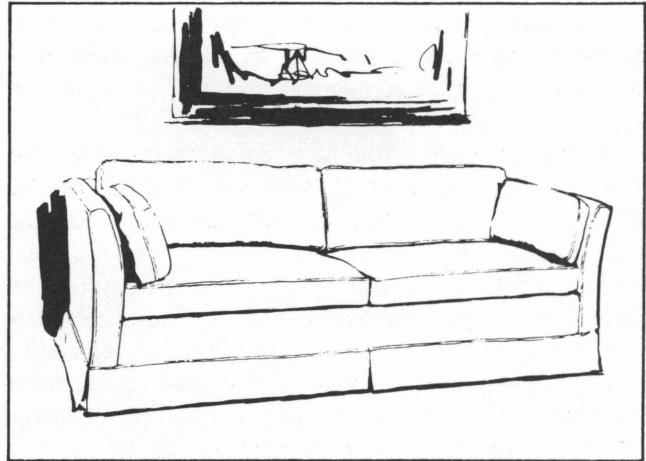
Since you cannot see the inside of a mattress and springs, your choice is made primarily by visual quality and a dependable label. The names of the dealer and manufacturer are also an indication of quality. However, you need to make your own test for firmness to be sure you are getting

the comfort you desire. Don't be embarrassed to lie down on the mattress to be sure of your choice.

If you like a firm bed, you can use a foam or innerspring mattress on a wooden frame. A flush plywood door and four wrought-iron legs topped with a mattress can serve very nicely for both seating and sleeping.

Two of these placed side by side will take a standard width double mattress.

What you save on the bed frame you can, perhaps, apply to the price of a good-looking cover or spread.



Furniture For Seating

A sofa or a sofa and upholstered chair are basic buys for the family living area. The amount of money needed for these can vary widely, depending on style, size and quality.

Straight lines cost less to build than curved ones; basic sizes and dimensions can be mass produced readily; unusual proportions and details require individual work. Therefore, if you are offered two sofas at the same price—one with straight lines and one with curves—you will get a better buy for your money in the straight-lined model.

If you can't quite manage the cost of a good-quality sofa, two inexpensive armless webbed chairs can make a love seat; three a sofa. Later, when you can buy the desired sofa, the chairs can be used as occasional chairs in the living room or bedroom. You can fit off-season purchases of rattan or other porch furniture into the underfurnished living room. This type of furniture can also serve quite nicely for dining. When you can afford a set of good dining chairs, move the indoor-outdoor chairs to the patio or yard.

Table Needs

Preparing, serving and enjoying family meals is a vital part of home life. In today's homes, eating may take place in the dining or living area, kitchen or patio. However, there is usually one relatively permanent place planned for daily use. The amount of space and the entertaining you plan to do will influence selection of dining furniture.

Furniture for dining should be comfortable and attractive, but need not be expensive. The atmosphere may be restful or gay and exciting.

You need table space to serve at least two people comfortably. Keep in mind that each person seated at the table needs about 24 inches of space.

A sturdy card table is a wise investment for most newlyweds and can take care of many needs. It can serve as a dining table until the budget will permit you to do better.

Your first dining table may be the drop-leaf or expandable type that takes up a minimum of space when not in use. Or you may wish to consider a casual table made of one of the easy-to-care-for materials that can move easily into the kitchen or out on the patio of your next house.

Like the dining table, other types of tables can be grouped according to the way they are used. Chests and tables can often be used interchangeably; for example, both can be used for end, bed-side or occasional tables.

For greatest convenience, end tables should be about the same height as the arm of the sofa or chair by which they are used. Where space is limited, stacking tables may add to the ease of serving informal meals.

The coffee table seems to have become the center of sociability. However the amount of space you have should determine whether or not you use one.



Storage Needs

Few apartments or houses have the type of storage space that will allow you to store items within easy reach and near the spot of first use. Only home owners can consider building ideal storage walls. But tenants can use adaptations of the idea.

Many furniture companies are making modular units that can be arranged, stacked and added to fit your space. This type of storage can take care of a multitude of needs and can be moved easily to your next home.

If you need drawer space, you may consider buying one of the versatile chests or commodes that can be shifted around and is equally at home in bedroom, living room or den.

Odd corners offer opportunities for extra shelving which can be both decorative and useful. Low shelves under windows can also be put to good use.

Other Needs

As you consider furniture needs, you are also making decisions about window treatments, accessories, lighting, carpets and rugs. These contribute character, individuality and livability to the home.

Keep in mind that inexpensive fabrics, such as muslin, theatrical gauze, and voile, made amply full and hung imaginatively can do wonders for the windows. Bamboo and plastic shades are other interesting possibilities.

Some couples would rather invest in sculpture or a painting and live with improvised furniture; others would like to play up one elegant piece of furniture.

Inexpensive prints and samples of high-style wallpaper can be used to cover bare walls.

Some kind of floor covering is not necessarily out of the question for your first home. An area rug or room size rug can do wonders for your living room and can move along with you to your next home or be transferred to the bedroom at a later date.

By all means, do buy that one wonderful thing—an antique mirror, an original painting, or beautiful chest that symbolizes the home of dreams. It helps to keep your goal clearly in mind.

If you find you just can't make these choices, you would be smart to seek assistance. The fee for a professional decorator, at least on a consultant basis, may save money in the long run.

Summary

There is no single way to solve the problem of wise initial spending. Many of the experts recommend that you:

—“Get a few good basic objects, such as a bed, comfortable sofa and storage chests that are durable, pleasing in character and can be used flexibly. Concentrate spending on these.

—“Fill in with inexpensive, perhaps temporary, things such as cane chairs, fiber rugs and unbleached muslin draperies.

—“Tend to avoid the moderately expensive things that are not quite what you want—not really excellent in design, structure or material—but which cost too much to be discarded later. In

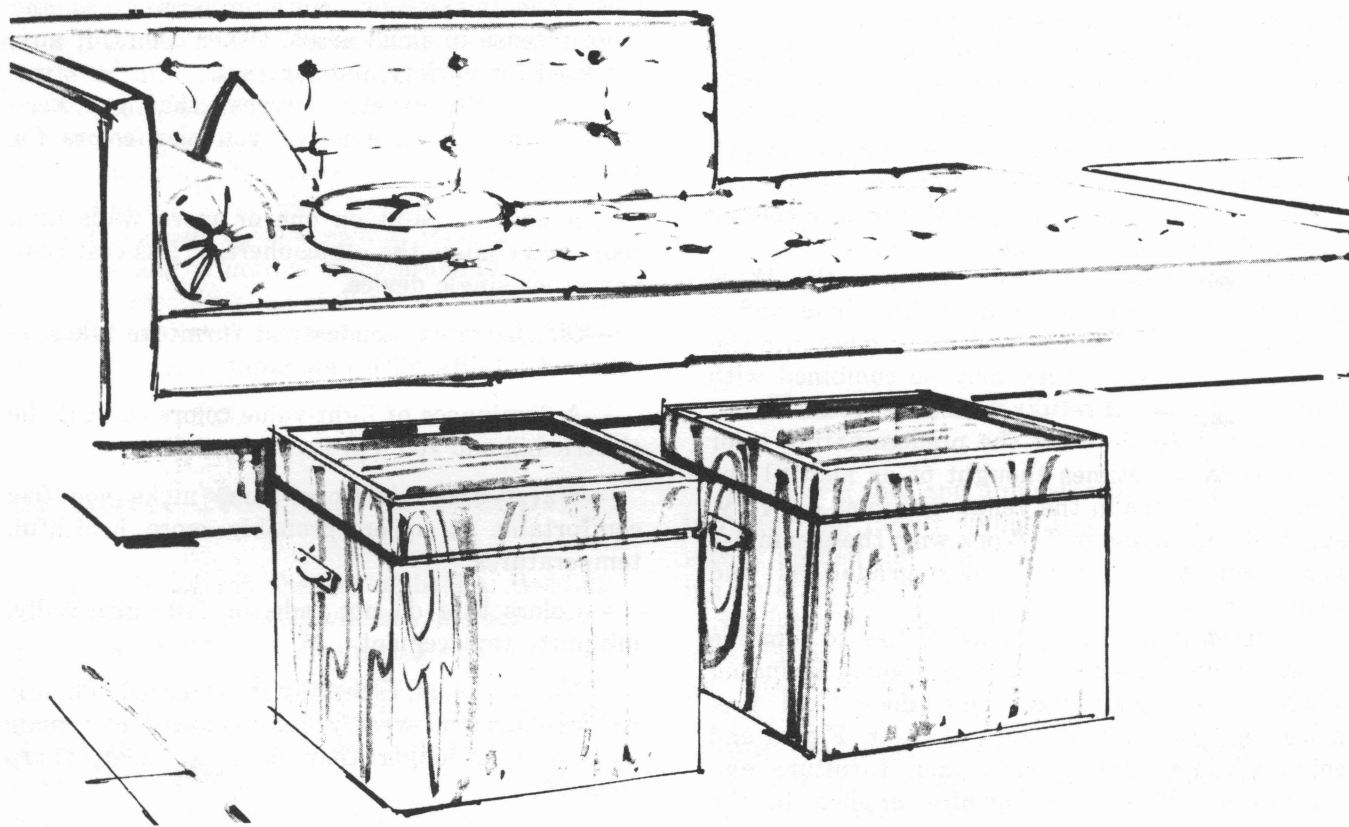
short, hit high and low in the beginning, fill in the scale as you go along.”

Furnishing your home will be a continuous process. It has a beginning but it rarely has an ending. Additions and subtractions are made as your needs change and as your taste matures.

Additional references:

Furnishing Your Home:

- H.E. 75: Begin with a Plan
- H.E. 79: The Furniture Story: Periods and Styles
- H.E. 78: Buying Case Goods
- H.E. 81: Buying Upholstered Furniture
- H.E. 80: Arranging Furniture



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