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Creating Private, Restful Retreat

Designers offer suggestions for decorating the perfect bedroom.

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When coordinated well, pillows can create an inviting bedroom. Too many pillows however, can be cumbersome. Photo courtesy of Victoria at Home

By Marilyn Campbell

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While most people crave a good night's sleep, it remains a dream for many. A bedroom that is both chic and comfortable can help the overworked find that restful slumber.

"A bedroom should be a retreat from the hectic lives so many of us live," said Sharon Kleinman of Transitions by Sharon Kleinman in Potomac, Md.

Local interior designers like Kleinman say accessories and tweaks can turn a bedroom into a luxurious retreat. These changes, tastemakers say, don't require major overhauls, just a few design ideas.

Seating in the bedroom offers a place to relax other than the bed. "Everything depends on the size of the room," said Julie Sproules, an interior design faculty member at The Art Institute of Washington in Arlington. "A nice option is have a reading nook with comfortable seats, good lighting and perhaps a small table."

Kleinman said, "If you have the room, it's always nice to have a seating area — even if it's just one comfortable chair and ottoman," she said. "Create yourself a place to kick back and read or relax without having to be in bed."

Accessorize the bedroom seating with a cozy throw. "They add a splash of color to a chair or chaise," said Victoria Sanchez of Victoria Sanchez Interiors and Victoria at Home in Old Town Alexandria. "You can use a throw to take the

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chill off."

A place to get dressed is also ideal. "A bedroom with a dressing area and good lighting is very convenient," said Sproules. "I have a closet in my bedroom with two doors that open, so when I open my doors I have my clothes, jewelry and mirror in a place where I can see them. I can get dressed in the morning without disturbing my boyfriend."

If there is enough space in the bedroom, Sproules also recommends a vanity with a mirror, proper lighting and a stool without arms so it's easy to turn from one side to the other when getting ready.

A dish or bowl for storing personal items is also helpful on a nightstand or dresser. "I have a bowl for my earrings when I forget to take them off before going to bed," said Sanchez. "For men, it could be a place to drop keys instead of dropping them on the dresser and possibly damaging the wood."

When it comes to lighting, Sanchez recommends keeping it soft. "A beautiful lamp next to the bed with a nice shade that will filter light is the first thing I would recommend," she said.

To create a restful retreat, Kleinman often forgoes patterns, "but maximizes lots of different textures like linen, silk, mohair, velvet and chenille."

Preferred color palettes are warm but not too bright or glaring. "I like soft bronze with powdery blues, silvery grey and creams or varying shades of brown and beige punctuated by accents of light teal," she said.

When it comes to accessorizing a bed, Kleinman says less is more. "Don't overdo it on the pillows. I layer the bed with no more than three rows of pillows. You want the bed to look inviting. Too many pillows just become a hassle and the bed loses its elegance."

Kleinman's ideal bed includes a row of bolsters or extra-large king shams followed by three Euro shams and then one long rectangular accent pillow or two smaller square accent pillows. "Either store the sleeping pillows or make them the first row up against the headboard," she said. "Rows of sleeping pillows plus all the decorative pillows are just too much."

The decorative, accent pillows help create a polished look. "It could be lumbar, a bolster, to unify the whole look," said Sanchez. "It could be monogrammed or beaded. It could be the one fancy pillow that you splurge on, but also a decorative pillow that will never have a head on it."

When it's time to turn down the bed at night, Kleinman suggests storing the decorative pillows in an upholstered storage bench near the bed.

Finally, control the amount of light that filters through the windows. "I prefer floor-length draperies that are lined with 'bump,' which is a heavy felt-like lining, or blackout lining," said Kleinman. "Most of my clients prefer blackout lining. Keep the drapes simple and not too fussy. Heavy cornices or valances are distracting and they dilute that feeling of calm."

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