



Semi-sheer curtains, like the ones in this room by McVitty Interior Consultants provide a soft, filtered light.

## ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO PERFECT PLANNING

*We ask seven designers to reveal their top tips for creating a stylish bedroom with a touch of luxury*

“The more time you put into planning, the better the outcome,” says interior designer Karen Howes, co-founder of Taylor Howes Designs. She has seen the main bedroom move up her clients’ agendas in recent years. “When we start on new-build projects, we’re setting aside more square footage for the main bedroom. In a refurbishment, we often gain extra space by sacrificing one of the other bedrooms. If you have a four-bedroom house, it can be worth changing it to a

three-bed. I converted my flat in Mayfair from three bedrooms to two – as a percentage, a third of the total space is given over to the bedroom.”

The reason bedrooms are grabbing more space is because they’ve taken on the roles of other rooms in the home. “The ideal is six-star presidential suite living,” says Karen. “People in larger spaces often create a mini flat in their bedrooms, with a living room, his and hers bathrooms, TV and a fridge.”

## LAYOUT

Interior designer Dan Hopwood says that suite-style main bedrooms have evolved as a result of our addiction to open-plan living: "People tend to find there's no privacy. Their children are taking over, so the bedroom has become the grown-ups' sanctum". Dan says a good designer can create a bedroom suite that makes the morning rituals of getting up, bathing and dressing more efficient. "In the old days you'd have separate rooms for bed and bath and maybe a dressing room too. The suites we design are a bit like going through a car wash. From the bedroom, you enter an in-and-out bathroom, where the 'out' door leads to the dressing room, and you pop out the other end fully clothed." A variation is to have the walk-in wardrobe or bathroom, or both, behind the bed. The bed is brought to the centre of the room and a headboard extended to the ceiling, behind which is a dressing area/bathroom with the entrance and exit either side of the headboard.

## LIGHTING

Another important element in planning any bedroom space from scratch is a good lighting plan. A main bedroom needs at least three separate lighting scenes, says west

London interior designer Antonia Stewart. "They are: an overhead light for hoovering the floor or tidying up, such as spotlights in the ceiling or a pendant; low or ambient lighting in the form of table lamps on the bedside and occasional tables; and a separate reading light either side of the bed. The last can be a task light consisting of a few little LEDs on a moveable stem. In my bedroom, I have all the lights on switches by the door and, so that you don't have to get out of bed to turn them off, another control on each side of the bed. An ideal siting for this arrangement is 95cm off the floor on the wall, 8-10cm away from either side of the headboard. Lighting is a juggling act. You need to know how high your bedside table is before the electrics go in."

Several sources of ambient lighting are needed to create the warm glow desired in a serene bedroom. Some solutions feature concealed LED rope lights under cabinets, beneath shelving and windowsills or tucked inside the suspended edges of a coffered ceiling. "We create a 'floating bed' by using a concealed rope light along the inside of the bed base," says interior designer Alan McVitty, 020 7349 0002, [mcvitty.co.uk](http://mcvitty.co.uk), "while rope lights inset into the ceiling above curtains give the curtains a wonderful glow at night."



Floor-length curtains ensure elegance in this Taylor Howes design.

## WINDOWS

In a period property, original windows, including sash or mullioned, are desirable but designers advise against old-fashioned treatments. "We prefer contemporary-style curtains, using a wave track recessed into the ceiling for a sleek contemporary look, or curtains with minimal pleating on a simple pole," says Rosalind Calow of Staffan Tollgård Design Group. "We never make curtains that are half-height, even if the windows are. It looks inelegant, rather like wearing trousers which are too short."

Anthony Bevacqua at Janine Stone says, "In a penthouse we have just completed we used blackout blinds and a soft, self-patterned sheer, which we ran right across the whole elevation. You get a wall of semi-transparent texture, which is wonderfully luxurious and dramatic at the same time." ►

**INSIDER KNOWLEDGE** "Window treatments with wow factor can be the decorative focus of the room. I believe in a bit of theatre in an interior, and the windows provide that."

**ANTHONY BEVACQUA, DESIGN DIRECTOR, JANINE STONE**



A discreet dressing table is hidden behind a wall in this elegant suite by Taylor Howes.

An elaborate window dressing adds a sense of drama to this otherwise calm, muted scheme by Janine Stone.



Fitted storage makes the best use of space in this attic room by Thomas Griem.



Antonia Stewart uses simple shelves and wall lights to create a compact alternative to bedside tables.



Neutral silks and velvets provide textural interest against an exquisite feature wall in this Oriental style bedroom by Taylor Howes.

## FLOORS

The default bedroom flooring of the last couple of decades has been sanded floorboards and rugs, but designers are now seeing a return to fitted carpet as the flooring of choice. "People are asking us to put carpets back in the bedroom," says designer Dan Hopwood. Silk and wool, or textured wool, are preferable to natural fibre flooring in the bedroom as they are so much softer underfoot. Antonia Stewart adds, "I generally specify wool carpets or rugs. Sisal feels scratchy and it will also snag your tights. And if you spill your morning cup of tea, it's much more difficult to clean."

For those who still like the look of timber floorboards, there is now a middle way. Decorators are creating engineered wood floors with wells for outsized rugs. The rugs lie flush with the timber flooring, so there is no question of tripping.

## EN SUITES

The finishes and furnishings in en suite schemes are traditionally so different from those in the bedroom and separate dressing room that, to avoid any jarring contrasts, designers take great pains to harmonise the zones through decoration. Toning colours on the walls and floors of each area can be used as an aesthetic link, for example grey limestone in the bathroom complementing grey carpet in the bedroom. Accessories, such as towels in the bathrooms and pillows or upholstery in the bedroom, can share a single accent colour. Selected features can also be repeated in each area: perhaps bronze door furniture and cupboard pulls or chrome light switches. Few wallpapers tend to be suitable for both the bedroom and the bathroom, and tiles would look decidedly eccentric throughout, but there are a few custom wall-coverings that would look right carried through all zones: decorative, textured plaster walls and textured metal wall panels both make luxurious feature walls, and can even be used inside showers.

## LIVING ROOM FURNITURE

If you have the space for it, a sitting area is an increasingly popular addition to a main bedroom scheme. The trap that many an ambitious bedroom decorator falls into is adding so much extra furniture that a smallish room ends up looking like a bedsit. "A sofa or an armchair or two, with a small table and a reading light, looks inviting when

you come into a room," says Antonia. "Soft and comfortable furnishings accessorised with scatter cushions and a throw make the point that a bedroom isn't just a place to sleep, but can be enticing at other times too. A bay window is a perfect place to slot in seating, but make sure you leave some room around the sides for adjusting curtains or blinds." The rule of thumb with living room furniture in the bedroom is: if you can't walk around it easily, it shouldn't be there.

## TECHNOLOGY

While interior designers resist displaying AV equipment, increasingly clients demand home entertainment in the bedroom. The

**INSIDER KNOWLEDGE** "If a client has a slightly bigger room with a window opposite the bed, I will often specify a projector in the ceiling with a drop-down screen."

**THOMAS GRIEM, DESIGN DIRECTOR, TG STUDIO**

trick, according to interior designer Thomas Griem of TG Studio, is to conceal the equipment. "In smaller bedrooms, we'll often locate the wardrobe opposite the bed, then a television can be built into the wardrobe. The beauty of that is it could be hidden completely by the joinery." Thomas also sometimes recommends a drop-down screen integrated into the ceiling. "That has

wow factor," he says, "but doesn't break the bank. A 70-inch motorised screen costs £250 and you can buy a good projector for £1,000." Among the most useful technology in the bedroom, he adds is a video-entry screen: "If you have a lie-in and the doorbell rings, you can look from the privacy of your room and see if it's someone you want to get out of bed for."

## STORAGE AND DRESSING ROOM SPACE

Designers draw up a storage plan, just as they do for lighting. As people rarely throw away old clothes at the same rate at which they acquire new, it's advisable to plan extra capacity from the outset. "The big trend these days is for walk-in wardrobes or dressing rooms," says Karen Howes. "We get to know our clients very well

when we design these and discover whether they like to fold or hang their shirts, or how many handbags they own. More frequently, we're creating separate dressing rooms. The way to keep a marriage going is his and hers solutions."

If there isn't the space or the budget for a dedicated dressing room, then fitted

wardrobes within the bedroom can make an attractive feature wall. Popular finishing touches to custom-built closets include an internal light that switches on as the door opens, clothes rails with LEDs so that you can tell your pinstripe from your chalkstripe without needing a torch, and a wallpaper, fabric or leather

lining, which adds a touch of jewellery-box opulence. Free-standing bedroom furniture also enables clutter to be concealed within. Chests of drawers instead of bedside tables; storage beds with drawers or cavities under the mattress; and trunks and ottomans instead of coffee tables or benches will also keep the room tidy.

FEATURE KATRINA BURROUGHS



Sliding doors provide a neat entrance to the dressing area in this suite by Daniel Hopwood.

Thomas Griem's sleek design for a dressing room includes this high-lacquered chest with practical built-in seating on one side.