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Your Furniture Selection Se

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BEFORE YOU BU

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I BEFORE YOU BUY

by Glinda B. Leach

Furniture which expresses your family's way of life helps to make a house your home. It enables you to relate your living quarters to your personal taste and the world about you.

Today you have an excellent opportunity to individualize your home whether your budget be large or small. This is because of the wide range in styling and price of furniture available to you.

If you are like most families you seldom make large purchases of furniture. As a result you, no doubt, want furniture which is durable, comfortable, and of a style you enjoy.

Consider Type of Investment

Most people consider furniture a long term investment. They buy furniture which they expect to last many years. However, sometimes it is sensible to consider short term investment. If you are likely to move often for a number of years, this is a possibility. Or your income may be small compared to what it will be. In such case you may want to buy furniture which you expect to replace later.

But whether you are thinking of short or long term investment, you no doubt want the best for your money. An example of this might be dining furniture. If a minimum amount of money is spent it would be worthwhile to consider a well constructed folding table and chairs. This would be more durable than poorly made inexpensive dining furniture. Later when more money is available for dining furniture the folding table and chairs would continue to be useful.

Determine Amount to Spend

The amount of money spent on furnishings varies from family to family. This is largely due to differences in income, size of house, and needs and wants. However, you may want to compare your budget with general recommendations. At the same time it is well to remember that no rule of thumb can be applied to all situations. Some authorities consider one-fourth the cost of your house a reasonable investment for furnishings. They also suggest a figure equal to one-half to two-thirds of your annual income. Whether or not these estimates are right for you will depend upon:

- Your savings.
- Money you owe.
- Size of your family.
- Stage of your family cycle.
- Other factors in your long-term budget.

Buy Furniture to Fit Plan

You may want to work out a three to five year buying plan which provides for the purchase of some furnishings each year. This will help you view needed furniture and other household items as they relate to other possible expenditures. Also, such a plan gives you an opportunity to think about the complete interior of your house rather than individual items. It will help you to avoid hit-or-miss selection. Too, it will tend to guide you in buying what you really need.

To make a plan for buying furniture, list the approximate pieces you want for each room. Then draw your floor plan on paper. Locate the furniture you will likely keep. Next, add the pieces you want to buy. This will help you see how much floor space your tentative purchases will occupy.

Buying the essential pieces of furniture first, then additional items, is a good approach.

Know Your Dealer

Buy furniture from a reliable dealer whose word you can trust. Find a dealer who really knows the product you want to buy. Learn from him and others whether or not he and the manufacturer will stand back of the product they are selling.

Expect your dealer to be able to tell you about hidden qualities regarding construction and materials. In many cases he will have informational tags on furniture. He should be able to tell you about those and answer your other questions.

Do a Lot of Looking

One of the best ways to do a good job of selecting furniture is to do a lot of looking. In the meantime learn all the basic things you can about furniture. Ask questions. Read magazines. Browse in your local library. Talk to people who really know furniture.

When you buy furniture, plan far enough ahead to give yourself time to study pieces in relation to use and purpose. Compare quality with price. Read labels. Learn manufacturers. Collect facts to help you determine good construction and lasting style. The chances are the time you spend collecting furniture facts to fit your needs will be to your advantage. You'll no doubt do a better job in making your final selection.

Because of the need for furniture study before buying, newly married couples may want to start with a furnished apartment or house. This will allow time to decide what is preferred in furnishings. It will also give an opportunity to save money for the kind of furniture you want.

Learn Good Furniture Construction

Furniture should be able to take the use and wear it will receive for the length of time you want it to last. It can be no better than the design, quality of materials, construction, and finish. All of these deserve careful scrutiny.

Other circulars in this series give specific construction details for different types of furniture.* However, following are general questions which will help you make good comparisons.

Does the piece of furniture stand squarely on the floor?

Do joints seem to be firm and tight?

Do movable parts such as drawers fit well and operate easily?

Do the materials appear to be of reasonable quality?

What does the article look like from the back and underneath?

What can you learn about the parts you cannot see?

Is the finish durable, smooth, and evenly applied?

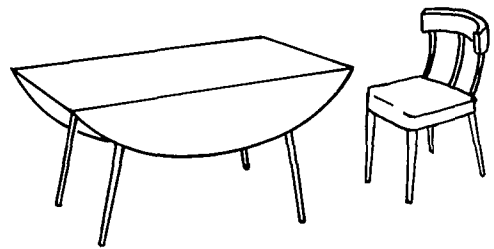
Do decorative aspects contribute to good design?

Shop for Convenience, Comfort, Beauty

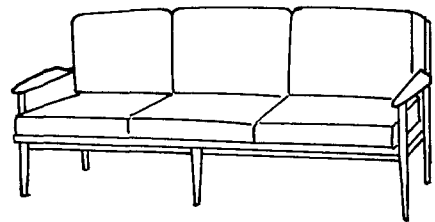
Furniture should be suited to its purpose. Also, it should be suited to the people who will be using it. For instance, heights of table, desk, and work surfaces should be comfortable. A chair should fit the individual who will be sitting on it most of the time. Test these heights and sizes by using the furniture in the same way you will be using it at home. Buy furniture for the utmost convenience and comfort of your family.

Ingredients of beauty in furniture include pleasing lines and good proportions. Pieces of similar line and feeling go well together.

Well designed furniture has harmonious, logical lines. The shape of a piece clearly defines the use to be made of it. As a result, horizontal and vertical lines usually predominate. Diagonal and curved lines serve as transitions for horizontal and vertical lines (Figure 1).



Good proportion means that all parts of an article look well together. No part seems too heavy or too light in relation to other parts or to the whole. Proportions of a rectangle approximately 2 to 3 or 3 to 5 are more interesting. A shape is usually more interesting when the length is about one and one-half times the width. This principle can be applied to good furniture design (Figure 2).



Do not feel that you must have all furniture of one particular style such as colonial or contemporary. However, one style probably should predominate. Let other pieces be those with similar line and feeling. In addition, select colors you can live with and enjoy. And buy the best construction and finish for the price you can afford to pay.

*See references, pg. 4.

In Short

You Want to . . .

ANALYZE

1. Look at the furniture you now have which will need to be coordinated with the new furniture you buy. Note especially the predominating line and form of your larger pieces.
2. Consider your family's needs for additional furnishings now and later.
3. Estimate the amount of space you have for additional furniture. Compare this with your family's needs.
4. List pieces which will add most to your family's living comfort.
5. Browse in good furniture stores. Ask questions. Read magazines. Study furniture in regard to quality, design, and price.
6. Draw a floor plan to scale. Add to the plan the furniture you now have. Check the actual amount of space left and compare that with your needs in new furniture.

BUDGET

1. Figure the amount of money you can spend on furniture. Be sure this harmonizes with other needs and wants of your family.
2. Compute the approximate amount of money which your new furniture will likely cost. Adjust the two figures: The amount of money you can spend and the amount of money you want to spend. Limit the quantity of furniture in preference to quality.
3. Consider the amount of money you can safely spend this year.
4. Work out a 1- to 5-year plan whereby furniture can be bought in harmony with other family needs.

CONSIDER

1. Continue to observe furniture. Do a lot of looking in stores. Arrive at certain styles which suit your family.
2. Get acquainted with dealers and professional decorators qualified to help you. Ask their advice. Show them your floor plan. Explain what you are considering.
3. Study specific pieces in your favorite styles by reputable manufacturers. Compare materials, construction, and finish with price. Discuss this with people who know quality.
4. Decide upon specific pieces which fit your plan.
5. When your plan has to be changed, do it deliberately and not on the spur of the moment.

Additional References

Books:

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- Art and Design in Home Living*, by Frances Melanie Obst, 1963, Macmillan.
- Seng Furniture Facts*, 1962, published by The Seng Co., 1450 N. Dayton St., Chicago, Ill.

Circulars:

- Your Furniture Selection Series*. University of Minnesota.
- No. II, Upholstered Furniture, Ext. Bull. 318.
- No. III, Wood Furniture, Ext. Bull. 319.

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