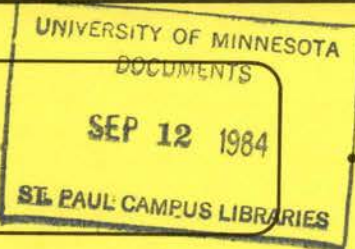


young families

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Your Child's Room

A child's room should be a friendly haven for a youngster — a place of security and peace. The room should satisfy the child, provide enjoyment, reduce stress, and provide for the child's current needs.

Try to make the room attractive to your child. If children like the way their room looks, they will be happier with it and take better care of it.

Housing studies show that when people place their imprint on their environment, they are more satisfied. This is true of children as well as adults. If children feel that they have a part in making decisions about their room, they will accept the decision far more and be satisfied with it longer than if they feel it was forced on them.

A child needs to feel a sense of possession about a room, but that doesn't mean complete freedom with the space and its contents. Sometimes ideas about furnishing and using a room turn out to be impractical. Parents and children together should discuss ideas and make compromises.

A child's room will change with time. A crib will be replaced by a bed; chests, tables, desks, and bookcases will be added; wall coverings will change. The "private" room may sometimes become "semi-private" as a new brother or sister joins the family.

Children's rooms are often furnished with castoffs, which are considered "good enough" until the children learn how to take care of their things. Unfortunately, without a sense of pride and feeling that it is "their" furniture, children may not feel committed to caring for it. Therefore, the furniture should be made "special" — by painting, refinishing, or even by how it's selected. Choosing "Grandma's dresser" or Uncle Charlie's chair" may give a piece more importance than "the old dresser and chair up in the attic." But it should not be so special that the furniture never seem to be the child's own.

Here are some ideas on how to make your child's room a useful and stimulating environment:

- Choose furniture that is functional, adaptable, and sturdy. A chest of drawers can withstand years of use if the style, construction, and materials are carefully chosen. It may have to be repainted or refinished, but the same chest could well serve a child from infancy through adolescence.
- Provide adequate storage. Storage needs will change over time. At first, toy boxes and low shelves may be all that is needed. Later these will be replaced or adapted to other uses. Space for storage is always at a premium in children's rooms, but a careful analysis of the room and its use often reveals additional potential storage.
- Use child-resistant surfaces. Scrubbable wall coverings, washable floor coverings, and soil-resistant upholstery are

highly recommended. Provide large bulletin boards or other similar surfaces for the inevitable posters, mementoes, ribbons, and photographs.

- Give prime consideration to adaptability and movability. Furniture seldom remains in the same location for long in a child's room. Therefore, resist built-ins. A better alternative is to have component pieces that can be arranged in different ways.
- Create a learning center. A desk with proper and adequate lighting and a comfortable desk chair are absolute musts. Both should be proportioned to the size of the child. A learning center doesn't guarantee use or good grades, but it can help, especially if it is incorporated into the room when the child is young.
- Provide privacy for your child. Even in a shared room, certain areas should be exclusive to each child and should be so respected.
- Have extra seating available, possibly just a floor pillow or two. As a child's circle of friends increases, the room at times may seem like Grand Central Station. Additional sleeping spots could also be provided, for "sleepovers," although it may not always be possible to store extra sleeping gear in the child's room.

Harold H. Alexander
Extension Specialist, Interior Design

Crib Safety

Each year hundreds of babies are injured or killed because of crib accidents. Many of these accidents can be prevented.

Widely spaced crib slats are a hazard. If your child's crib has slat spaces wider than 2½ inches, use bumper pads. The pads should cover the entire crib and be held with at least six straps. Trim the straps to prevent the infant from chewing and choking on them.

Be sure the mattress fits the crib snugly. Babies can suffocate if they become wedged between the mattress and crib sides.

Buy a crib with high sides. As soon as the child can stand up, lock the side rail at the maximum height and adjust the mattress to the lowest position. Remove bumper pads, large toys, and boxes — anything a child may climb on to get out of the crib.

Make sure locks and latches on the dropside of the crib are secure. Cribs should lock at the maximum height so they cannot be released by the baby or by other children.

Metal hardware on the crib should be smooth, with no rough edges or exposed bolts. Replace damaged teething rails. They can cut your child's mouth.

The cords on dangling toys should be less than 12 inches long so that they cannot become wrapped around baby's neck.

If you paint a crib, use only high quality household enamel. Do not use old paint that may have a high lead content. Remove old layers of paint so baby can't chew on toxic paint chips.

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Getting Nutrition Advice

More of us are concerned about our health these days. Often a new active life style leads to an interest in nutrition. But where can you get good nutrition advice for yourself and your family? The checkout counters at your local grocery store abound with nutrition advice. Most women's magazines run at least one nutrition article in each issue, often touting a new diet or magical vitamin therapy. How accurate is the nutrition information in popular magazines?

The American Council on Science and Health recently rated the accuracy of nutrition information in various magazines. The magazines were categorized according to the amount of nutrition coverage they provided — extensive, moderate, or limited. The articles were rated using the following criteria:

- Is the information in the articles scientifically sound and factual?
- Do the articles make inaccurate claims that certain foods or nutrients have special health benefits?
- What are the credentials of supposed experts who write or act as sources of articles?
- Are featured weight-loss diets safe, sensible, and effective?

Of the magazines with extensive nutrition coverage, two, *Self and Health*, received excellent ratings. *American Health*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Consumers' Research* were rated as generally reliable. *Family Circle*, with more than seven million circulation, and *Runner's World* were termed inconsistent. *Prevention*, and *Let's Live*, which are both almost totally devoted to nutrition, were given unreliable ratings. *Cosmopolitan* was also rated unreliable.

In the moderate nutrition coverage category, two magazines with wide circulation, *Good Housekeeping* and *Glamour*, received excellent ratings, as did *Essence*. *Vogue* was rated generally reliable. *National Enquirer*, with more than five million readers, was termed inconsistent, but was 77 percent accurate, better than you might expect. *Saturday Evening Post* and *Harper's Bazaar* were rated unreliable.

Many journals with limited nutrition coverage received excellent ratings, including *Reader's Digest*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Redbook*, *Parents*, and *Consumer Reports*. Unfortunately, two magazines with wide circulation, *McCall's* and *Ladies' Home Journal*, were rated as inconsistent.

In general, it seems that the quality of nutrition information in popular magazines is improving. But it is you, the consumer, who must differentiate between good and bad nutrition information. Here's one guideline: if it sounds too good to be true, chances are that it is. If you need more information, check with your doctor, who can refer you to a registered dietitian. Also, many community colleges offer nutrition courses. The Agricultural Extension Service will be offering a correspondence course on nutrition controversies in the coming year. Check with your county home economist for details.

Joanne L. Slavin
Extension Nutritionist

Buying Children's Boots

Important factors to consider when selecting boots for your child include warmth, comfort, and waterproofness.

The bones in children's feet are pliable and soft, and so it is extremely important to fit their shoes and boots correctly. Improperly fitted footwear can cause permanent damage. For this reason the purchase of secondhand boots or shoes for your child is not recommended.

Boots for children come in full sizes and one width. To allow room for growth throughout the coming winter months, select your child's boots approximately one size larger than the actual foot size measurement. Boots purchased more than one size larger than the foot size can be a safety hazard. Correctly fitted boots should be about ½ inch longer than the longest toe (if wearing socks only) or the tip of the shoe (if the child plans to wear shoes inside the boots).

When measuring for boots, measure both feet. Have your child wear the socks or properly fitted shoes that will be used with the new boots. Check the fit when the child is standing and both boots are laced or buckled.

A good quality boot for your child should be made with a hard counter to provide support for the heel of the foot. The counter is generally made of a piece of molded fiber or other stiffening material. Feel the back and the sides of the boot; the counter should be firm.

Another characteristic of a good quality boot is a steel shank. This piece of steel is inserted under the arch of the boot for reinforcement. All boots should have a shank. A squeaking sound while walking can indicate that the shank is loose. A wood or synthetic piece may also be used as the shank.

Most children's boots are made of synthetic uppers and soles. Select a waterproof boot to ensure that your child's feet stay dry when playing in wet cold weather. Linings made of synthetic fleece or synthetic fur are good choices.

Some boots such as the Moon Boot style often are not waterproof and should be worn only in dry cold weather. This style is not recommended for or preschoolers because of the difficulty in walking on the extremely thick soles.

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This Issue

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