

Transform your child's



Andrea Maflin

is an interior designer, artist and stylist. This is her fifth book and it's full of ideas on how to plan and decorate a child's room, with 25 step-by-step projects. Visit andreamaflin.co.uk.



Exclusive offer

Adapted from *Children's Rooms* by Andrea Maflin (£16.99, CICO Books). To buy for £14.99, including free UK mainland p&p, call 01256 302699, quoting reference X45.

Interior designer Andrea Maflin reveals how to create a country-style bedroom for your little ones

Creating a stimulating room for a child is all part of the joy of having children. However, it is easy to get carried away with romantic ideas and transient notions. Forward and spatial planning is essential because a special theme will date, and the room may need to double as a playroom or guest room. If this is your first child, don't buy everything straightaway. Just get the core scheme right and invest in key items; you'll be surprised how a wish list changes.

Beyond the baby stage, always consult the room's occupant first. You need to create a calm atmosphere to encourage sleep, so avoid bold, clashing colours or patterns. If your child wants a special theme, such as ponies or tractors, try to add motifs through soft furnishings, which are easier to change than wallpaper. And while it is tempting to spare no expense, it is best to set a budget and stick to it.

CHOOSE A THEME

If your child is keen to have a themed room, beware of anything that they will tire of quickly, no matter how much they like it now. Keep walls and floors neutral and add special interest through accessories or soft furnishings. Make sure the themed elements are removable or easily replaceable.

For many little girls, the ultimate bedroom is one that makes her feel like a fairy princess (right). Make her dream come true with motifs sprinkled on furniture and bedding, which can be replaced with plainer pieces later. In a boy's room, confine a spaceman or sporting theme to posters, pictures and the bedlinen.



BE ECO-FRIENDLY

It makes sense to give your child an eco-friendly environment, especially in the early years. Consider buying paint from suppliers such as EarthBorn Paints and Ecos Organic Paints; pick shades that will stand the test of time, such as cream and white.

Think about which items you would prefer to buy new, such as a cot with a good mattress, and those you may be able to pick up secondhand or track down

at local auctions, such as chairs or old chests of drawers. It's easy to give recycled pieces a fresh lease of life with a few coats of paint, and you can maximise storage by simply screwing the metal lids of glass jars to the underside of a shelf (left).

If you are buying new items, investigate ecologically aware designs from companies such as Jojo Maman Bébé's organic range and from Earthlets.



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MAKE IT LAST

Tempting as it is to buy furniture scaled down to a small child's size, it doesn't make sense for your pocket or the planet. Far better to invest in well-made, standard-size pieces that will withstand wear and tear. Anything cheap will only need replacing fast.

Parents often complain about their children's rooms being untidy, but this is often due to lack of storage. Try to provide space for clothes, books, toys and hobbies (left). You can't predict what they may like doing in two or three years' time, but it makes sense to choose furniture that offers flexibility for the future. For instance, high-level beds are fun, and offer floor space, too.

If there is no space in the room for play, consider making an outdoor den – a garden shed (above) would be ideal. Keep the decoration simple with minimal furniture and a few shelves or hooks for storage. Once your children have taken occupancy of their den, try not to interfere too much – this is very much a special 'Adults Keep Out' environment.

CREATE A PLAY AREA

If your children have reached an age where they no longer need constant parental supervision, ask yourself whether there is a space in your home that you could turn into a dedicated play area or playroom (left). The advantage of this is that it will help keep toys and games from taking over every corner of the house, and give children a space in which they can be creative, without being constantly told to clear things away. Practicality is the key when it comes to decoration. This is a room that will have to be durable and tough, so stick to a neutral scheme, ideally with hardwearing flooring, such as painted floorboards or laminate. You can add cosy touches with soft furnishings and washable rugs. Furniture also has to withstand everything from glue to paint splashes, so choose a table topped with melamine or cover it with an oilcloth. Washable items, such as beanbag chairs, are also ideal. The aim is to design an environment that encourages your child's creativity, no matter how messy. If more than one child will be using the playroom, it would be wise to avoid themes that may cause arguments – go for bold geometric shapes such as circles or stripes instead.

