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# Take Back the Clutter

When it comes to living in this town, dreams are grand—but space is often lacking. Luckily, interior designer Amy Lau has made a living making small apartments act big—here are her top 10 tips.

## LIGHTEN UP

Ceiling fixtures are a great way to bring light into your room without increasing clutter. Wall sconces, pendant lights, and chandeliers are also space savers. I treat sconces like art and usually source them in glass, flanking a mirror or above a fireplace. For the others, the obvious placement is over a dining table. But I'm a fan of drama, so I also like to hang pendants over an intimate seating area or side table.

## BALANCE THE SCALE

I have clients who want an overstuffed sofa with a really large coffee table, but this will look out of proportion and dominate the room. Assess your space and don't be afraid to use blue painter's tape on the floors and walls to mark where you'd like to place certain pieces to see if they fit.

## START WITH A BLANK CANVAS

The lighter the color on walls, the airier the space will appear. My trick is taking a client's

favorite color paint, mixing it half and half with white, then painting the ceiling and trim the newly blended color for a slight contrast. This creates a monochromatic palette that expands the room.

## FEEL THE RHYTHM

Your room will look professionally touched if a color, pattern, or theme is repeated throughout the space. Another trick is to take the dominant color on a sofa or drapes and pull lighter and darker shades of that color for accent pillows and maybe even upholstery for a chair. This really makes an area look tailored.

## EDIT, EDIT, EDIT

Your home environment should be about you—but not the *complicated* you. The definition of clutter is anything you possess that doesn't enhance your life on a regular basis. If you don't love it and you're not using it, get rid of it.

## OUT OF SIGHT

Electronics all look much better when hidden. Remember, if you want to place a credenza under your television, make sure it's at least 20 inches deep for things like the DVD player and sound system. Also, opt for bookcases with doors, and choose end tables with a closed base. A wall unit with open and closed compartments can cover up audiovisual equipment and provide room for decorative displays as well.

## SIMPLIFY FLOORING

A floor covered in a solid color or uncomplicated pattern will open up your space. My favorite materials are teak and walnut, with a plank size of around four and a half to six and a half inches, finished with a light stain and satin urethane. Lighter-colored floors will enlarge the area and carry the eye.

## A MIRROR MENTION WILL DO

Mirrors reflect light, which in turn, makes a room brighter. Try placing a long rectangular mirror in a narrow hallway or in a dark corner. Add a vintage touch and mix it up by adding one with character. I always go to 1stdibs.com to search for mirrors by historical periods.

## MAKE IT CRYSTAL CLEAR

Glass-topped tables, along with chic Lucite pieces, provide little visual distraction. Clear vases along with coffee and dining tables act as silhouettes, also with minimal encroachment on a room. A few of my favorites are sculpted tables from Noguchi and Vladimir Kagan. Todd Merrill Antiques on Bleecker Street also has an amazing collection of these glass fixtures.

## MULTITASK!

Multitasking isn't a skill meant only for people. Coffee tables with shelves or hidden drawers with storage can also do double duty. Headboards that include shelves can look very stylish in the bedroom. An ottoman or bench that lets you store magazines and gives you a place to put your feet up is a smart space saver. Ditch the oversize desk and work off a sleek kitchen counter or your dining room table.