

# HOW TO COMBINE THE NEW AND THE OLD

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# How to Combine the New with the Old

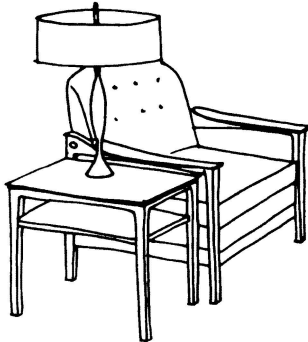
Prepared by Katherine L. Habel, Extension Home Furnishings Specialist

Mixing furniture styles and woods is not new. It has been done down through the ages. We have always combined the best of the hand-me-downs with the new. Few of us have all new pieces. We may buy a few new pieces, inherit a few, have wedding presents, a few fillers-in, and sofas and chairs bought just for comfort.

1. Decide what feeling you want in your home, formal or informal. The 18th century influence is formal, while a mixture of Early American and contemporary is informal.



2. Consider scale and proportion--Furniture similar in scale should be placed together. You have seen a spindly end table and short lamp placed by a massive velour sofa or chair. Do they go together? Neither would a slim chair go with a large, important looking chest. A bulky suite consisting of sofa and 2 chairs may dwarf everything else in the room. Small scale furniture is better in a small room. A few larger pieces of furniture can be used in a large room. In considering scale, think in terms of big and little, light and heavy, tall and short. Tables may be a few inches too high for the arms of the chair or sofa. Lamps may vary too much in height in the same room. What can you do about them?



3. Consider line--Curved lines may be feminine, graceful, and sleek, or bulky and fat. Straight lines may be rounded or they may be stiff. Which do you prefer? Avoid exaggerated lines. Too many curves give one a feeling of going around in circles. Too many straight lines are rigid and uncomfortable.



4. Consider feeling--This is something you must cultivate. Do you understand what makes 2 pieces of furniture look compatible or incompatible? Would you use mahogany with limed oak? Study shop windows and magazines.

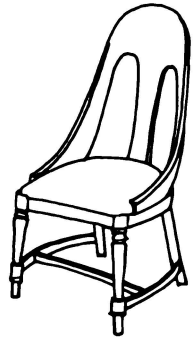
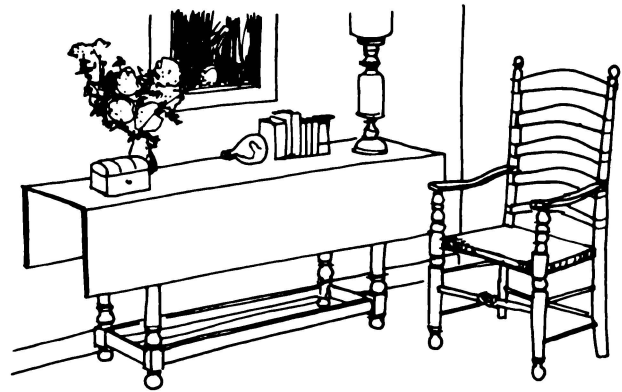
5. Consider comfort--If you have a stiff, uncomfortable parlor suite, or if you already own a suite, disperse it throughout the house in places where comfort is not a prerequisite. You need a day bed or sofa, a comfortable chair, suitable table, and lamp for each member of the family. Do you own some furniture for recreational living?

6. Consider color and texture--Color and texture give you much leeway in combining the old and the new. You can make an old piece of furniture contemporary, traditional, or early American depending on the color, design, or the texture you use for the cover. Color is one way of tying unmatched pieces together. Contemporary fabric and patterns can give new character to old pieces. Natural finishes on wood furniture relate the different woods in one room. Let one kind of wood



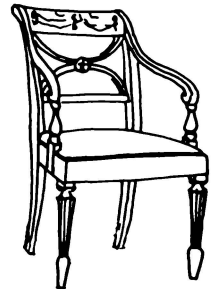
dominate but don't be afraid to use different kinds together. We mix periods cheerfully so long as they harmonize in size, texture, design, color, and feeling.

7. Combine -- To have courage in combining furniture, you have to know the different periods, good line, and simple design. Good design is always good design in any period. Simplicity is the keynote to a livable home.



"Keep it simple" cannot be over-emphasized. You must be a critic of your own home. Each time you return from a few days away from home, look at your house as if you have never seen it before. Is it satisfying? Why? If not, why isn't it? Try to put your finger on the reasons. Get these things corrected, to create livable and comfortable rooms with a few important accessories.

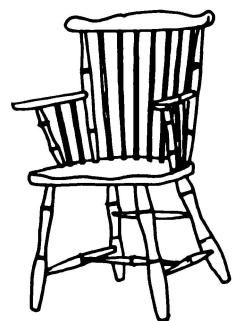
8. Cleanness of line--Contemporary rooms in which we have used the best of the old and some of the new have a cleanness of line, a new simplicity. Each article must be useful or needed to complete a unit of furnishings:



Lamps should give lots of light. Lampshades are straight-forward, undecorated white or near white (no flowers or ruffles on shades).

Green plants, magnolia leaves, scrub pine in a wooden bucket, coffee grinder, planter, jug, or crock give a livableness and a contemporary feeling when placed at the exact place needed.

Sideboards and leggy chests can fit into the contemporary picture when the ornamental top is removed and the cabinet brought nearer the floor by cutting off the legs.



End tables can be sawed off and 2 half tables fastened together to be the exact size to go beside the arm of a chair.

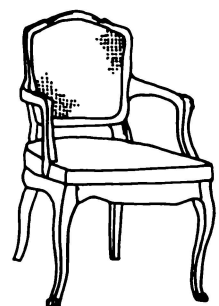
If you use a coffee table, try sawing down an old kitchen table to 16", finishing it with a water repellent finish or covering it with a marbled finish for durable results.



Paint heavy bedroom and dining furniture of the borax type the same color as the wall to make it less conspicuous.

It pays to buy from a quality furniture or department store where you can get sound advice, rather than a borax-type store. At such a store, you will need plenty of will power not to come home with modern suites with waterfall edges, ornate hardware, and over-elaborate mirrors.

Carrying charges are high in these stores. This furniture will not last because of its cheap construction; and it does not mix with either the old or the good, simple, natural finished, contemporary furnishings.



## SUMMARY

Good contemporary furniture has natural finishes which can be combined with simple furniture and accessories of other periods.

You can mix contemporary with old accessories that have strength, fit the need of the family, and the space available.

You can make your rooms contemporary through the use of fabrics, rugs, and color.

You can give your home a lift with contemporary accessories and plants.

You can use different woods together by choosing a dominant one.

You can give your home a contemporary feeling by eliminating pictures, vases, and accessories that are not needed.

Don't use pretentious furniture with unpretentious.

