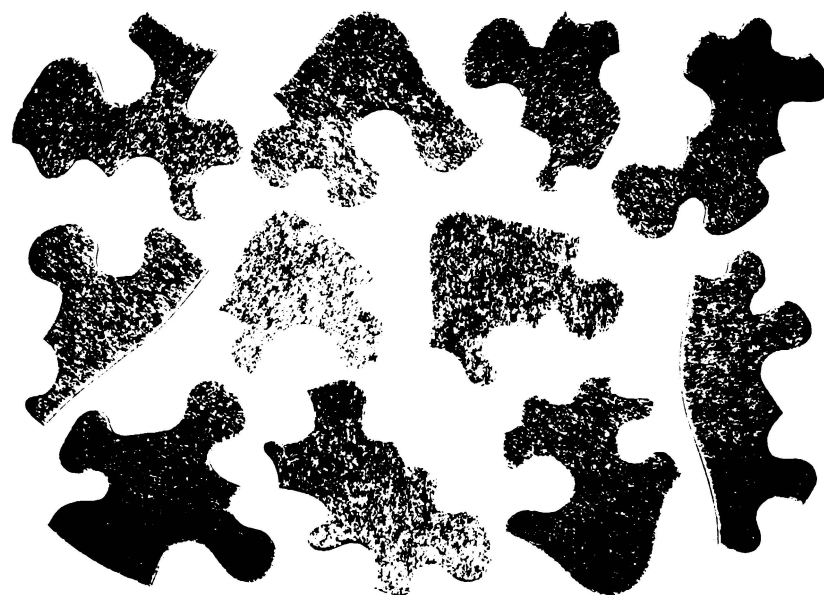


# Furnishing the First Home

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE  
AND STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



**Guide for Young Living  
puts it all together!**

<b>ENTERTAINING</b>	
<b>careers</b>	<b>ART</b> <b>Leisure</b>
<b>Furniture</b>	
<b>BUDGETS</b>	
<b>Decoration</b>	

## ALCHEMY OF IMAGINATION

*Ideas are great and very plentiful; but it is often puzzling to figure out what is a good design choice and what is a bad one. It might be helpful to ask yourself 3 questions:*

*Is it good looking?*

*Does it work?*

*Does it make sense for my way of living?*

*The first question implies that you have an eye for scale and form, the second that you are practical minded, and the third that you can analyze the reason for the object and the reason for the way it was made.*

*How does the puzzle of furnishing the first home fit together? Check out the plan, the colors you want, and your own ideas.*

*The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service by law and purpose is dedicated to serve all people on an equal and nondiscriminatory basis.  
An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.*

*Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Agriculture.  
W. E. Skelton, Dean, Extension Division, Cooperative Extension Service,  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA 24061.*

## FURNISHING THE FIRST HOME

*Prepared by Katherine L. Habel  
Extension Specialist, Home Furnishings*

The home is an expression of the people who live in it. It fits their way of life. It has an air of ease and lively enjoyment instead of the stiffness of a department store window. It takes time to work out interior arrangements that really reflect you, your family, and your tastes. Whether you're furnishing a room, an apartment, or an entire home, the same elements and principles make it attractive and inviting.

The problem that puzzles most of us when we embark on a furnishing project is where to begin; how to get your furnishings together. It might be a puzzle, but just remember that the parts can fit together.

### *Get Your Furnishings Together*

A beautiful home is up to you; plan to make it the most pleasing place on earth. Take time to learn your tastes and analyze your needs. When you're just beginning to think about putting your home together you may feel timid. Perhaps you don't think you have a "style" and you don't even know what kind of furnishings you like. As you get involved in decorating, however, you'll discover that you do have tastes, style preferences, color favorites, and definite likes and dislikes.

### *Begin*

Begin by looking through decorating magazines and books and collecting a notebook of ideas and a file of clippings and pictures of rooms you admire.

As you make new discoveries, evaluate them. Then, take a first hand look by window shopping and visiting showrooms where you can touch fabrics, sit in chairs, get the feel of wallpaper, and step onto rugs. Collect fabric swatches, wallpaper snips, and paint color cards to take home and think about carefully.

### *Discover*

Discover how effects are created as you look at successful rooms. Notice that it's possible to visually reduce large open spaces with patterned or multi-colored rugs, wood wall paneling, large patterned wallpapers, and warm colors like red, yellow, and orange.

You can also enlarge small rooms with smooth expanses like wall to wall carpeting, solid wood or vinyl floors, pastel or light color walls, receding small-patterned wallpaper, and cool colors like green, blue, and lilac.

Ask yourself whether you prefer cozy pattern-filled rooms, or ones with polished, airy openness, and whether you want a room to soothe or excite your senses. Self-knowledge pays off.

### *Be Aware*

Be aware of the many different furniture types (like Early American, French Provincial, etc.), and their accessories, but realize that you don't necessarily have to stick to one style. Many different elements can be mixed harmoniously and creatively. When you see a room you like, analyze it. Take in small details like ashtrays, pillows, pictures, and floral arrangements. Constant looking and appraising will teach you a lot about your own preferences. Keep your mind open to new ideas, and you'll soon discover that attractive designing isn't something that takes lots of money.

A spotlight on a cluster of green plants or a brick wall decorated with old brass hangers can be more aesthetically pleasing than a pretentious piece of costly furniture. By learning about your decorating tastes, you'll liberate your creativity and gain self-confidence.

### *Evaluate*

Evaluate your living space before you begin to shop. Taking a close look at your own rooms, plan to:

- . utilize space. Careful planning will help you avoid a crowded or empty look.
- . pay attention to scale. Relate every piece of furniture to the others and to the room dimensions.
- . make graceful furniture arrangements allowing traffic to flow around, not through groupings.
- . arrange lighting fixtures to create an inviting atmosphere. Also, plan well-lighted reading places.
- . use color to integrate all elements. Choose fabrics, woods, textures to match and contrast.

### *Measure*

Measure your whole room, wall to wall and floor to ceiling, including windows, doors, closets, odd-shaped niches, staircases, and whatever will limit furniture size and position. Make notes of these to take when you go shopping.

### *Draw Up*

Next, draw up a floor plan using these measurements. Some apartments may provide you with a floor plan, but if not you can use quarter-inch graph paper to make your own. Allowing each 1/4 inch square to represent one square foot of the room, indicate where windows, doors, fireplaces, closets, electrical outlets, and built-ins are. Then cut out to scale shapes of the pieces of furniture you may already have and those you plan to buy. Move the shapes around the floor plan to determine their best placement for the pattern and the appearance, cozy or spacious, that you want to create.

### *Figure Out*

Figure out your needs and test them against your budget. It's better to invest in a few good pieces than to skimp on quality in order to get everything you want right away. You can make a list of the things you want for each room, and underscore items that are essential for now. Plan to add the other pieces gradually, as you can afford them.

### *Enjoy Your Own Know-How*

Once you've done your homework, you should feel quite self-assured in the stores. You know your budget. You know which pieces you want to buy now and which later. You know what styles and colors you like, and the mood you want to create in your home. Have your floor plan, notebook, and file under your arm for quick reference when you go shopping.

### *Visit Several Stores*

Before you decide where to buy, visit several stores. Expensive stores are not necessarily the best, but they often offer excellent service and designers who will go over ideas with you at no extra cost. Follow friends' advice on stores. Select those that have good quality, financing, and delivery.

### *Test*

Test all furniture before you buy it. Check wood pieces for sturdiness by looking underneath seats for corner braces and secure legs. Place your palms on table tops and shake. Sit in chairs and wiggle to make sure they are wobble free. Drawers should slide easily and doors should swing freely. Look for tags that give maintenance tips. On upholstered pieces, read the labels to be sure the fabric is resistant to fading, dirt, mildew, and that the stuffing is what you want. Upholstery should feel lump free and have straight seams and matched patterns. Chairs and sofas should have steady arms and seat edges that are hard, but yielding. Run your hand under seats to be sure supportive webbing is closely woven. But most important, upholstered furniture should feel comfortable to you.

### *Expect to Wait*

Expect to wait for delivery, and ask about the exact amount of time to avoid frustration. (Unless you buy "in stock" merchandise, you'll wait a minimum of four weeks.) Ask if there are extra charges for delivery "up to and beyond the door." Ask about the store's damage policy--you should have time to check delivered items for damage before the delivery people leave your home. Avoid paying before delivery, but if you do, make sure the bill of sale is marked "paid in full" and pay by check, never cash. Read any contracts and clear up ambiguities with an attorney or a bank officer. And always demand copies of anything you sign for your own protection and peace of mind.

## *The Plan*

*Plan for Livability* - Remember that painting walls, putting up curtains, and filling space with furniture will not necessarily make your home livable. Create surroundings that are comfortable, convenient, and attractive, a setting for happy living that will help develop individuality and character, and one that is easy to live with because it withstands maximum use and requires minimum care.

*Analyze Your Needs* - Furnishing your home must be geared to changing lives, changing tastes, and expanding and contracting families. So, you might consider simple and flexible furnishings that can be used in different rooms.

*Plan Areas for Activities* - Consider what you are going to use the area for. Each activity will have furnishings requirements. Most rooms require light and privacy and a suitable floor covering. Ceilings, walls, and floors form the background of the room, so color and surface texture are major considerations. The accessories, such as pictures and plants are to a room what jewelry is to a costume. Some contribute beauty alone, others are also functional.

Consider the size relationship between furnishings and the total look. Furnishings should be neither so large that they overwhelm a room, nor so small that they look lost in it. A large, massive piece of furniture among small pieces, or in a tiny room, is overwhelming.

A fabric can set the theme for the room. Keep in mind that no one fiber is superior to another and that most fabrics are designed for specific purposes. All have individual characteristics which make them highly desirable.

*Furniture* - If furniture is to give lasting satisfaction, it must be comfortable and serviceable as well as attractive. Good quality furniture is not cheap, but its durability is worth the extra cost. It is most important to have good, comfortable mattresses and sleeping equipment. Other items can be obtained later. In the interim, apply the alchemy of imagination and color to make the space liveable. Rummage shop choices may not be ideal, but with some imagination and ingenuity they can add character to a room.

*Color Plays an Important Part* - Careful and wise planning enables you to come up with a coordinated color scheme. The item you use to get color inspiration may be new, such as a prized wedding gift. Decide on the color plan and begin collecting color samples for each detail. Put the color samples out where you can look at them, large samples for large areas, smaller samples for furniture, and still smaller samples for accessories.

It can be fun to plan, to dream of what you want, and to work out a definite color scheme. With these hints and your own imagination, the puzzle will become an attractive and pleasing home.