

# DON'T LIMIT CREATIVITY

Decorating small areas can pose a challenge but interior designer Jane Brown says there are simple ways to create the right setting

**W**HEN designing in a small space, don't let size limit your creativity. In fact, with just a little imagination and some clever tricks of the trade, you can completely transform your pocket-sized space into a haven of style, comfort and functionality.

International interior designer Jane Brown knows what can be achieved in limited space, and has turned many a cluttered shoebox into a light, stylish home.

She says the key to limited-space interior design is keeping the colour palette consistent throughout.

"You can use colour, but you just need to be aware of where you put it," Jane says. "Keep the colour palette really similar, and don't have anything too dramatically different."

Feature walls in particular should be used judiciously in small spaces.

"Feature walls are fine, so long as you're aware of where you're drawing the eye," says Jane.

"If you tend to have long, thin rooms you want to actually draw the eye across. Putting a feature wall in a narrow space is not necessarily a good idea because it draws the eye right down and makes the space seem smaller."

Jane suggests widening a narrow space by creating interest on the left-hand side of the room.

"We read from left to right, and the same happens when we walk into a room – the natural tendency is for our eye to go from left to right.

"So if you have a small space, this is a really good opportunity to put something on the left to expand the eye.

"You can use anything – a vibrant vase of flowers, curtains, or a piece of art. It's all about creating points of interest in the home that capture a person's interest without them

being aware of it."

Another of Jane's limited-space tricks is to keep neutral colours at waist level and have colourful points of interest at ground level – a vibrant rug or a bold throw, for instance.

"I also like to colour-code books," says Jane. "If you want to extend a room, you start with the darker-bound books at the bottom, so you've got weight. Then to create a sense of airiness and lightness you have all the lighter colours higher. It helps to create 'anchors' in the room."

Jane also recommends choosing items of furniture with dual functions – such as a sofa with storage underneath.

"That's an awesome investment in a small space. You can store doonas or cushions or pillows or photo albums or books – anything really.

"Another thing I have been advocating with a lot of my clients is to invest in a really high-quality airbed to use in the spare room.

"Then you can use that spare room as a play room or a home office or somewhere that you're actually going to use, rather than a bedroom that only gets used a few times a year."

Finally, she says, you need to cut the clutter.

A common mistake when designing in small spaces is to opt for small items of furniture and accessories, and Jane says this only creates "visual clutter".

"People baulk when I say it, but you should have big pieces of furniture in small rooms," she says.

"A lot of people mistakenly put in lots of little things because they don't want to cramp it, but all this does is draw the eye down to the small details and make the room look cluttered.

"You just need to be brave."

**Lisa Amphlett**



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*Examples of a room makeover by Jane Brown, top, and a balcony makeover, above. Inset: Jane Brown.*

*Pictures: Supplied*

