

Design Your Bedroom for Better Sleep

TOSSING AND TURNING? LET'S FIX THAT.
A FEW THOUGHTFUL TWEAKS CAN TRANSFORM YOUR
ROOM INTO A DREAMY REFUGE.

BY NANCY RONES

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTOPHER TESTANI

YOU KNOW THE TRIED-AND-TRUE ADVICE for getting better sleep: Limit before-bed screen time, skip afternoon caffeine, stick to a schedule. It's all effective, but only to a point—because your bedroom environment may actually be sabotaging your shut-eye. “The bedroom is becoming less of a sanctuary for sleep and more of a second living room, office, and kitchen,” says James Wyatt, PhD, director of the Section of Sleep Disorders and Sleep-Wake Research at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. And try as you might, it's really hard to get decent sleep in Grand Central Terminal. So we tapped experts for advice on setting up a bedroom that promotes deep, restorative sleep and looks gorgeous, too. You'll see those ideas in action in these three inspiring rooms. Nighty night.



CONSIDER YOUR ARTWORK

Opt for soothing abstract pieces or landscapes, and avoid anything too contrasting or dramatic.

CLASSIC

TYPE OF BED

Upholstered headboards help muffle sleep-interrupting sounds. Interior designer Paige Schnell suggests using low-maintenance fabrics, like distressed leather or the easy-to-clean tweed options by Sunbrella.

DECORATIVE PILLOWS

Limit the mash-up of patterns in your bedroom by maxing out at two shams and one oversize lumbar pillow, says Schnell. Place a bench at the foot of your bed to catch those cushions at night, rather than tossing them on the potentially dusty floor.

TO BUY: Paint: Solitude by Benjamin Moore (AF-545); benjaminmoore.com for info. *Anemone* by Denise Wong (framed art), \$237; minted.com. Lula white and brass gourd table lamp, \$70; lampsplus.com. Hampshire white nightstand, \$299; landofnod.com. Herringbone indigo woven cotton rug, \$588 (9 by 12 ft.); annieselke.com. Harbour bench, \$898; serenaandlily.com. The Soft White Pleated bed skirt, \$89 (queen); craneandcanopy.com. Butterfield duvet in ocean, \$498 (queen), and standard sham, \$144; matouk.com. Oscar/Oliver Theodora bolster throw pillow, \$70; bedbathandbeyond.com. Tamsen Curve upholstered headboard, \$1,149 (queen); potterybarn.com. The Real Sleep by Real Simple mattress, \$995 (queen); realsleep.com. The Leesa bed frame; \$125 (queen); leesa.com.

ROMANTIC

WINDOW COVERINGS

"The darker your bedroom is, the easier it can be to fall asleep, and the better your sleep quality will be," says Wyatt. The light from a street lamp or the glow from a neighbor's TV still filters through your closed eyelids. And exposure to light, even if it's dim, can interfere with the secretion of the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin and your body's internal clock.

NIGHTSTANDS

These clutter zones can feel like a to-do list, and the resulting distraction makes it harder to sleep. Schnell recommends side tables that have at least one shelf (to stash a book or magazine) as well as one drawer or cabinet (to keep papers and personal items out of sight). Edit down the top of the table to a lamp, alarm clock, glass of water, and feel-good photo.

NO PHONES, PLEASE

Keep your device on sleep mode overnight and stash it out of sight in the nightstand drawer.



BED PLACEMENT

"Placing our bed against a wall where we have a clear view of the door and, if it's feasible, the window can make us feel safer and alleviate worry that prevents complete relaxation," says design psychologist Sally Augustin, PhD. Avoid backing your bed up against a window; drafts or blaring sun might disturb your slumber.

FLOORING

Define your sleep zone with the help of a soft area rug, suggests Augustin. It lends a cozy feel to the space, provides a warm landing pad for your feet, and helps buffer noise while you're asleep. Opt for plush fibers—like soft wool or a wool blend—for maximum comfort.

OUR EXPERTS

Sally Augustin, PhD, design psychologist and principal of Design With Science in La Grange Park, Illinois
Laura Benko, feng shui expert in Brooklyn, New York, and author of *The Holistic Home: Feng Shui for Mind, Body, Spirit, Space*

Terry Cralle, RN, certified clinical sleep educator in Washington, D.C., and coauthor of *Sleeping Your Way to the Top*
Melanie Kaplan, chief creative officer at the Company Store, a bedding retailer

Rebecca Robbins, PhD, sleep researcher at NYU School of Medicine and Beautyrest sleep expert

Paige Schnell, interior designer and owner of Tracery Interiors in Rosemary Beach, Florida

Karin Sun, CEO and founder of the online luxury-bedding company Crane & Canopy

James Watson, DBA, adjunct associate professor at North Carolina State University's College of Textiles and owner of Textile Training and Consulting in Apex, North Carolina

James Wyatt, PhD, director of the Section of Sleep Disorders and Sleep-Wake Research at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago

TO BUY: Paint: Magnolia Home in Ella Rose, from \$42 per gallon; shop.magnoliamarket.com. Cotton Luster Velvet blackout curtain in platinum, \$139 (96 in.); westelm.com. Vienna full-spectrum modern crystal column table lamp, \$150; lampsplus.com. Parada upholstered panel headboard in beige, \$270 (queen); wayfair.com. Mums hemstitched Supima percale sheet set in aqua mist, \$178 (queen); garnethill.com. Fossil embroidered ivory decorative pillow, \$116; annieselke.com. Jadeite velvet throw pillow, \$10; worldmarket.com. Shelly round velvet pillow, \$39; urbanoutfitters.com. The Valencia Porcelain Green pintuck duvet cover, \$139 (queen); craneandcanopy.com. Forest Floor gray rug, \$399 (5 by 8 ft.); landofnod.com. Celine Collection nightstand, \$350; pier1.com.

ORGANIC

BED HEIGHT

According to believers in feng shui, a raised bed frame allows energy to easily flow underneath you, which leads to deeper slumber. Laura Benko, a feng shui expert in Brooklyn, New York, says that storing clutter in the space beneath your bed blocks that energy flow.

MATERIALS

Instead of using bold patterns or colors, add personality by mixing up textures (like a chunky knit throw and embroidered pillows) in calming neutrals.

TO BUY: Paint: Emerald Interior in Gossamer Veil (SW 9165); sherwin-williams.com for info. Durango bed set with rails, \$529 (queen); houzz.com. Wyatt sconce, \$219; cedarandmoss.com. Emmerson reclaimed wood nightstand, \$349; westelm.com. Venus hand-knotted wool viscose rug, \$1,048 (5 by 8 ft.), and Trimaran stripe indoor/outdoor Wouf dog bed, from \$98; annieselke.com. Scattered embroidered linen duvet cover, \$498 (full/queen); coyuchi.com. Nublado throw, \$395; the-citizenry.com. Bridge Street Siena oblong throw pillow in marshmallow, \$40; bedbathandbeyond.com. Falling Leaves pillow, \$229; rebeccaatwood.com. Randa indoor/outdoor pillow in taupe, \$79; luluandgeorgia.com. Classic Core sheet set in cream, \$129 (queen); brooklinen.com.

WHO'S SLEEPING IN YOUR BED (BUT SHOULDN'T BE)?

Kids: "Children are very active through the night, which can be disruptive to adults," says Wyatt. Letting kids fall asleep in your bed and then moving them is not a great plan either: "Moving children within two to three hours after they fall asleep can startle them and provoke sleep terrors or sleepwalking."

Dog: Your pet is adding heat to the space, moving around, and leaving behind slobber, dander, and other allergens. Place a dog bed nearby to give him a cozy spot to rest and yourself the reassurance that he's close at hand.



KEEP IT NATURAL

Organic materials elicit a sense of calm, so incorporate branches, plants, or fresh flowers into your space.

REAL SLEEP BY REAL SIMPLE

In the market for a new mattress? Generally, mattresses should be replaced every seven years. Learn more about ours at realsleep.com.

PICKING THE RIGHT MATTRESS

"There are many mattress options available, and what's relaxing to you will depend on your body type, preferred sleep position, weight, whether you're a hot or cold sleeper, health issues, and so on," says Terry Cralle, RN, a certified clinical sleep educator in Washington, D.C. Here, her top tips for purchasing a new mattress.

When selecting a retailer, scan online reviews. Pay attention to feedback on warranties, customer service, the knowledge level of the salespeople, and ease of returning and exchanging so you can approach your purchase with confidence.

In a store, spend time lying on mattresses

alongside your partner in your main sleeping positions. (The Better Sleep Council recommends spending 15 minutes on each mattress.) Consider: How easy is it to change position? How much do you feel it when one of you moves?

If you're buying online, look for retailers that allow you to test-drive the mattress at home, and scope out their return policies in case it doesn't work out.

Better-Bedroom Sourcebook



PAINT

“Since the bedroom is a place to relax, stay away from intense wall colors and select soothing shades of paint,” says Schnell. “White can be jarring because it reflects a lot of light.” The designer’s top choices for bedroom walls: soft gray or light blues and greens that say “spa.” These shades pair easily with a wide range of furnishing styles.

TO BUY: Mountain Air by Sherwin Williams in Emerald Interior, from \$69 per gallon; sherwin-williams.com for info. Gray Owl by Benjamin Moore in Aura Interior, \$70 per gallon; benjaminmoore.com for info.



WARMER BULBS
Bright white LED bulbs give off blue light comparable to what electronics emit. Swap them for warm-white LEDs with a color temperature of 2,700 degrees Kelvin, says Wyatt.



TEMPERATURE TIP
The ideal temperature for sleep is between 60 and 67 degrees Fahrenheit.



PILLOW TALK

“There isn’t one pillow that fits us all,” says Rebecca Robbins, PhD, a sleep researcher at NYU School of Medicine. When you’re lying on the mattress in your dominant position, your head and neck should be level with your spine. Test out different arrangements to see if you need more than one pillow for proper cushioning and support. If your pillow is more than two years old or has lost its buoyancy, it’s time to toss it. Besides a lousy night’s sleep, the wrong pillow can lead to headaches and neck pain.

A back sleeper should aim for medium thickness and a cushion that offers some extra horizontal lift toward the bottom for neck support.

A side sleeper needs a voluminous pillow, to fill the space between the ear and shoulder. A pillow on the firmer side with a wide gusset—the rectangular panels sewn around the perimeter—is a solid choice.

A stomach sleeper should opt for thin cushioning (or no pillow at all) to avoid neck strain. Down, which compresses easily, is usually a good fill option.



PILLOWS: PHOTOGRAPH BY ADDIE JUELL; TO BUY, FROM TOP: THERAPEUTIC TRUCOOL MEMORY FOAM CONTOUR PILLOW, \$70; WAKSUTTA EXTRA-FIRM SIDE SLEEPER PILLOW, \$15; AND REAL SIMPLE DOWN PILLOW, \$50; BEDBATHBEYOND.COM. LIGHTBULB: PHILIPS 60W EQUIVALENT LED LIGHT BULB WITH WARM GLOW EFFECT, \$10 FOR 2; HOMEDEPOT.COM. THERMOSTAT: NEST THERMOSTAT E, \$169; NEST.COM

LINENS: PHOTOGRAPH BY ADDIE JUELL; TO BUY, FROM TOP: MUMS HEMSTITCHED SUPIMA PERCALE SHEET SET IN AQUA MIST, \$178 (QUEEN); GARNETHILL.COM. CLASSIC CORE SHEET SET IN CREAM, \$129 (QUEEN); BROOKLINEN.COM. SWEDISH FARMHOUSE WASHED LINEN AND COTTON SHEET SET IN EGGSHELL, \$208; GARNETHILL.COM. OXFORD STRIPE DUVET COVER, \$189 (FULL/QUEEN); SCHOOLHOUSE.COM. SCATTERED EMBROIDERED LINEN DUVET COVER, \$488 (QUEEN); COYUCHI.COM. MATELASSE COVERLET, \$209 (QUEEN); PARACHUTEHOME.COM.



BEDDING Q&A

Q. What sheets should I buy?

The golden child has long been 100 percent cotton. “A great performer in warm and cold temperatures, it’s easy to wash and soft to the touch,” says Karin Sun, CEO and founder of the online luxury-bedding company Crane & Canopy. Cotton sheets are commonly found in either a percale or a sateen weave. Sateen, which has a subtle sheen and a silky, smooth surface, can be a tad warmer than percale, which feels similar to a crisp men’s shirt. Though jersey sheets are often 100 percent cotton, they may be worth rethinking: “Due to its stretch, jersey tends to bunch throughout the night,” warns Sun. Outside of cotton, linen is a great choice for those who want a lived-in look, and polyester is gaining in popularity.



A BETTER WAY TO WAKE UP

Research shows that gradually waking up to an artificial sunrise may boost alertness, mood, and cognitive and physical performance. A dawn-simulating alarm clock will rouse you with light that slowly brightens as it gets closer to your wake-up time. If you choose to use a traditional alarm clock, turn it away from you so any lit numbers aren’t glaring at you in the dark.

TO BUY: Philips Somneo Sleep and Wake-Up Light, \$200; usa.philips.com.

430

Thread count matters, but only up to 430, says Sun. Going above this number requires creative manufacturing methods that don’t necessarily produce a higher-quality product.

Q. Does thread count matter for comfort?

Look for the terms “long-staple cotton” or “extra-long-staple cotton” in the description instead. These long fibers are turned into the finer threads that indicate quality.

Q. What about the high-tech sheets I’m seeing?

Keep in mind that there isn’t a lot of objective science backing claims that sheets can wick away moisture, cool the skin, improve circulation, or fight germs. But if standard sheets haven’t served you well, these innovative goods may be worth trying.

BEWARE THE SNOOZE BUTTON

Those short snippets of sleep may actually make you feel drowsy all day long, since you aren’t sleeping for a full cycle. You snooze, you lose.



3 WAYS TO DEFEND AGAINST ALLERGENS

Run an air purifier. “Clean air is critical for deep sleep, and an air purifier is a fantastic way to remove impurities,” says Robbins. It can also provide a soothing whirr of white noise at night. Our pick: Dyson Pure Hot + Cool Link, \$620; dyson.com.

Invest in encasements. Use soft, allergy-proof encasements to fully envelop your mattress, box spring, comforter, and pillows. Protect-A-Bed’s AllerZip encasements (from \$25; protectabed.com) provide superhero security against mites, mold, pollen, pet dander, mildew, and other mattress contaminants. Plus, the thin, soft material stays silent when you turn over.

Keep bedding clean. Wash your sheets, pillowcases, and blankets weekly in hot water, recommends the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology. Your duvet cover should be cleaned every other week.