



JUST FOR KIDS

ABOVE:

The White elfa Mesh Kids' Coloring Table, \$266.65 each from The Container Store, is a versatile component system at work here in this creative play area for children. The White Melamine Desk Top is supported by two elfa mesh drawer units, which provide easy-to-reach access to supplies. A roll of 24-inch banner paper is included as a renewable canvas.



CREATIVE SPACES FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES by AMANDA FLATTEN

You have painstakingly put your touch on every room in your house, so why not let your children do the same in their rooms? Together, you can collaborate to come up with a plan that will provide them with a special space where they can dream big and get creative.

LEFT:

Talk about well-rounded storage options, The Container Store's Calypso Round Box (\$14.99 each) is made of recycled fiberboard and provides vibrant storage anywhere in a child's bedroom or playroom.



ABOVE: To keep clutter under control, Kitchen Design Concepts created a “parking lot” for backpacks, papers and other things kids haul home with a hook and a drawer for each child.



ABOVE: The Thomas Extra Wide Armoire from Pottery Barn Kids is great for TV and game storage in the playroom. The armoire features beadboarding, crown molding, dovetail joinery and frame-and-panel construction.

RIGHT: Instead of entirely child-proofing your kitchen, make your kids part of daily activities and food prep. Kitchen Design Concepts helped this family with four kids plan their kitchen so the dangerous things are out of reach and the children have kid-level access to art supplies, healthy snacks and plastic ware.



BEDROOM TO GROW

One day your child likes pink, the next day it's green. Or maybe your boy is in to dinosaurs, but next year race cars will be his passion. Painted murals are a wonderful way to add a bit of whimsy to a room, creating a fantasy land, but make sure it is something the child will like for quite a while before making the investment.

Amy Dillard, local artist and owner of Ribbit-Ribbit, a home décor and accessories manufacturer, says it is important to find a balance between what the child wants and tasteful choices adults crave. “Consider how a room is going to grow with the child, and make choices that are easy to change out as the child’s tastes change,” Dillard says.

Rather than adding custom pink tiles in a child’s bathroom, Dillard suggests adding a wallpaper boarder that can be removed or changed if the child’s tastes change or the home is sold.

Purchasing furniture that can grow with the child is also a good idea, according to Christine Shanklin, owner of Closets by Chicka

and president of the National Association of Professional Organizers DFW. “You can get a crib that converts into a bed or a changing table that will become a dresser,” she says. “You want to stay away from the race car bed that your child won’t like next year.”

Sally Morse, director of Creative Services for Hunter Douglas, the custom window fashions manufacturer, says you can use small decorative elements that are easy to change out to reflect children’s shifting interests. “Hang a tutu on the wall for a budding ballerina, and for your little league star, create a window valance with a bat,” she says, adding that decorative touches can be added using the company’s Playful Possibilities Nantucket window shadings. “You can mix and match fabrics and hardware in colors like Spinnaker Blue, Yellow Canopy, Limeade and Cotton Candy.”

Of course bedding options with interesting patterns and colors can be the spotlight in your child’s room. “When choosing bedding, be practical,” Dillard says. “Buy washable fabrics, and don’t buy tons of pillows that will just end up on the floor. If you do have decorative

resources

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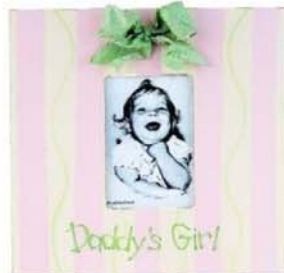
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ABOVE: Design a bedroom that will grow with your child, such as this room featuring items from Pottery Barn Kids — Aiden Quilted Bedding, the Kendall Bed and the Martin Swing Arm colorful lighting fixture.

LEFT: Handpainted frames by Ribbit-Ribbit (\$42) are cute accessories for a child's room; available at The Magic Moon or Cat and the Fiddle.

pillows, make sure there is a place to store them when the child is sleeping. Any system that is easy to maintain will be maintained."

ORGANIZED ZONES

In today's newer homes, children often have their own bedroom and a playroom. With so much space devoted to children and their interests, things can get a little chaotic unless maintained in an organized fashion.

"When you are organizing your children's bedrooms or a playroom, it's important to involve the kids from the beginning," Shanklin says. "The earlier you start the better. If the child starts out organized, they will grow up to be an organized adult. You have to get them into a routine."

Shanklin says proper furniture and storage make all the difference in a bedroom or playroom. "Break a room up into zones," she says. "In the bedroom, as the kid gets older, he can have a sleep area featuring a bed with under bed storage, a desk/homework area, and if the room is large enough, an area to play or hang out with friends." ▶



ABOVE: The Platinum & Driftwood elfa Study Zone, \$448.46 each at The Container Store, is great when it comes to organizing your child or teenager's room. Strong solid shelves (shown in a Driftwood finish) provide storage space for books, trophies and treasures, right above a spacious desk that is perfect for studying or computer time. The shelves are easily adjustable.

Adjustable storage in the bedroom closet will grow with the child from infant to teenager. "Some items you can use when the child is a toddler and a teen, such as hanging canvas bags. You don't have to buy the small kiddie size; you can buy the larger ones because they will last longer," Shanklin says.

If you have a playroom or game room, you can create an area for toys, an area for TV, movies and Playstation, and another space for a desk and computer.

Shanklin says putting things in labeled containers is a good storage method. "Storage doesn't have to be ugly," she says.

According to experts at The Container store, if your child usually plays with toys in a family common area, choose storage boxes made from natural materials, like bamboo or Makati, which you can attractively display on a shelf when company comes. Or, if you are pressed for space in a child's playroom, use overdoor pockets for small stuffed animals and other small items. Closing a closet door can quickly conceal the pockets. Also, use containers of different colors to organize different types of toys. Label containers if they are not see-through so your child can immediately identify what's inside and where toys should be placed when they are finished playing with them.

"A lot of times when I go into someone's house for the first time, their child is 10, but they still have toys from when the child was six," Shanklin says. "The rule is if a toy comes in, a toy goes out."

Furnishings and décor that will grow with the child and proper storage solutions mean less time spent picking up toys, less stress for mom and dad, and ultimately a happier family.



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Gary Shepherd, LI 6308

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