

RIGHT AT HOME: Solutions and help for small-space living

By KIM COOK 2 hours ago



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Setting up home in a small apartment poses all sorts of challenges.

First, there's the floorplan: With small rooms come issues like storage, and where to put the bed.

Then there's the furniture: Will it fit up the stairs, and will you need a toolbox and an engineering degree to put it together?

Retailers and design services have answers. Design-your-space websites can give you accurate floor plans and helpful decor suggestions. Cleverly designed furniture is scaled for smaller footprints, and might come to the door in easy-to-assemble formats, or with assembly service as part of the package. There are now more options than ever for the diminutive nest.

THE FLOORPLAN

Sites like [Modsy](#) and [Havenly](#) give you a thorough questionnaire to pinpoint your style preferences. You can choose or attach pictures of favorite spaces, as well.

Then designers will come up with a few plans from which you can choose. At Modsy, for example, you can get a 3-D rendering based on your photos and measurements. Click on furnishings throughout the layout to see if you want to buy them or switch them out for other options. You can also include pieces you already own or are thinking of getting, and your designer will position them in the plan for you.

[Fiona Byrne](#), an interior designer in New York City, says one way to tackle the challenging, long but shallow living rooms so common in the city is with space-saving furniture.

“Look for narrower pieces such as console tables instead of deep credenzas, and instead of a coffee table, get end tables for either side of the sofa,” she advises. “Dual-purpose pieces are great — side tables that can double as stools when guests come over, a console table that doubles as a desk, etc. Plug-in wall sconces eliminate the need for additional side tables and don’t require any wiring. All you need is a screwdriver.”

She also likes wall-mounted televisions: “People can install the cable box vertically slotted behind the TV so there’s no need for a piece of furniture under the TV.”

THE FURNISHINGS

“Small spaces are tricky,” says designer Alison Pickart of Larkspur, California, who has done several apartment projects. “When I want a small space to feel larger, I keep the color palette monochromatic. The eye is less ‘distracted’ and the space feels more seamless.”

“Mid-century pieces work well in tight spaces because their scale is more petite,” she says. Check out small-space collections from [West Elm](#) , [Crate & Barrel](#) and [Pottery Barn](#) .

Sebastian Brauer, Crate & Barrel’s vice president of product design and development, says small-apartment living is about striking a balance between function and style.

“Consider pieces that contribute to a light and airy visual vibe, as well as options that maximize your vertical space,” he says. “And don’t shy away from bold color; especially if your space has limited light. Bright colors can bring warmth and energy to your space.”

If you’re not quite ready to invest in furniture, consider renting it. In New York and San Francisco, [Feather](#) offers “furniture freedom”: rentals of three months or longer for couches, chairs, tables and other furnishings from name-brand furniture partners. You can renew the lease, or buy something if you fall in love with it.

West Elm has just launched a partnership with [Rent the Runway](#) , where subscribers can choose from 26 bundles of soft furnishings for the bedroom and living room, curated by style, print, texture and color.

[Inside Weather](#) lets you try out a piece of furniture for a year and return it if things just aren’t working out.

They’ve got a selection of contemporary pieces, like apartment-size sofas, midcentury modern chairs, credenzas and tables of all sizes. Everything ships for free. Inside Weather tells you how your purchase is going to arrive — the number and weight of boxes — and how long it’s likely to take to put together. The company has a signature snap assembly feature that means a sofa can come out of its two boxes and be ready in about 10 minutes.

Developments in memory foam technology have been a boon to the home shipping market. Instead of big, bulky mattresses that might not fit through apartment doorways, some companies are sending mattresses and pillows tightly rolled in compact boxes. [Coddleme.com](#) , [Lull.com](#) and [Ghostbed.com](#) are among the options.

Detroit-based furniture company [Floyd](#) was started by friends Alex O'Dell and Kyle Hoff, who noticed that millennials were mobile and less inclined to acquire major pieces of furniture. They offer just a few basic, easy-to-assemble pieces — a sofa, platform bed, some tables — and ship them free to select cities. They've also got a kit of four white or black metal legs and a roll of sturdy strapping material, so you can turn whatever you like into a bespoke table.

If you need help putting something together, consider hiring a service like [TaskRabbit.com](#) . It finds local pros for tasks like assembly or breakdown of furniture, or pickup, delivery and moving, and repair/install jobs. First-time renter Lea Nesdale and her friends used the service in their new Manhattan flat.

“We had two IKEA dressers, and the directions were really confusing,” she says. “On TaskRabbit, you can see the potential builder’s skill set, so we booked someone who builds these often. He did it all in two hours.”