

Livingetc

# KIDS' ROOMS

Children's bedrooms can now be zoned for activities, lit for mood and decorated to express a personality – just like grown-up spaces. 'Go to your room' has never sounded so inviting

WORDS • CLAUDIA BAILLIE PICTURE RESEARCH • NICOLA ROWE



Paint is one of the easiest ways to brighten up a child's bedroom. These boards are transformed with stripes in Select Water-Borne floor paint (available in any RAL colour), £29.45 for 2.5l, Holman Specialist Paints.



# Four steps to THE PERFECT ROOM FOR A CHILD

A space that's big on personality and style, but has a practical side, gets top marks



Children love to personalise a space, and salvaged letters have bags of character, as do retro toys. For **letters** like these, try In The Woodshed. For **old-school games**, browse junk shops or one of the International Antiques & Collectors Fairs.



Vintage furniture is often sturdier than modern pieces and can complement the style of other rooms. An iron bedstead can be painted any shade, while old crates are a fun alternative to standard shelves. Head to A Barn Full Of Brass Beds for a vintage **bedstead**. For **crates**, try Hen & Hammock, £22 each.

## 1 PLANNING MAKES PERFECT

'Before you think about decoration, it's important to get the practical aspects of a child's room right,' says Catherine Hooper at online shop Little Baby Company. 'Consider how the space will be used: do you have a separate play area, or will this space end up housing most of the toys? Will

the bedroom be shared, now or possibly in the future? Might built-in storage be an option? Are there enough power sockets or do you need to fit more?'

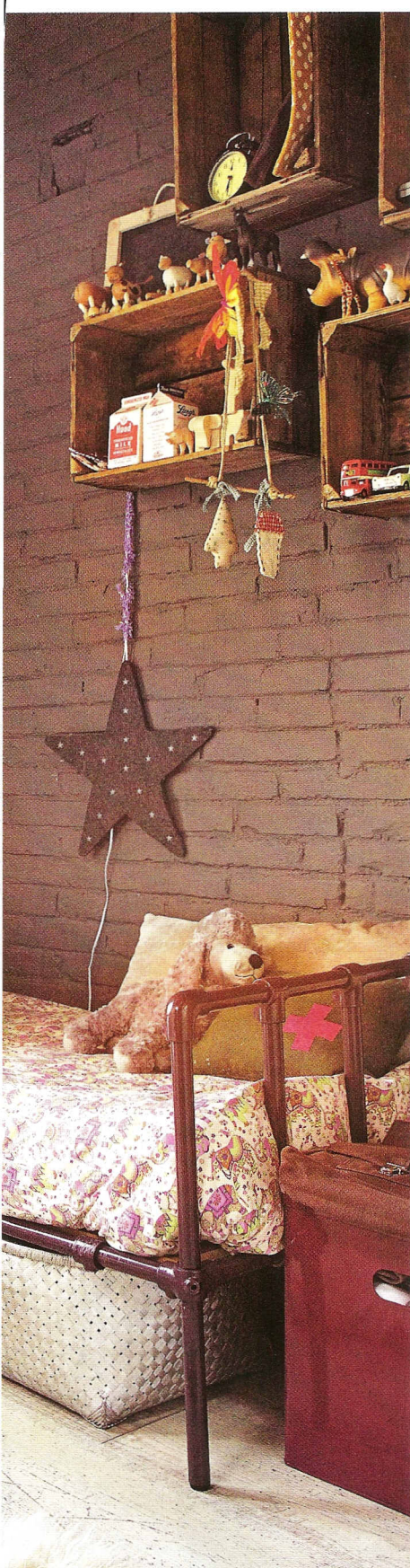
Also bear in mind that, although it may seem like a good idea to allocate the smallest bedroom to a baby or toddler, kids grow up quickly. So sacrificing a larger bedroom will provide more space for the

inevitable accumulation of toys and, as your child grows up, a homework area too. 'It can help to draw up a simple floor plan,' says designer Ursula Wesseling, whose company Room To Bloom specialises in children's interiors. 'Try to zone the room according to activities like sleep and play, consider different layouts and decide what makes the best use of the space.'

## 2 ROOM TO ADAPT

'Children's needs will change as they grow, so choose furniture that can be modified as a child gets older, and try to avoid anything too age-specific,' says Ursula Wesseling. 'If you make wise decisions at the start, it means you shouldn't have to update your child's space so often over the coming years.'





the rest of the house, so don't compromise your own taste.' Decide on a focus early on, and if you're not sure where to start, choose one thing you really love – it could be a poster, a vintage toy or a fabric – and plan your scheme around it.

#### 4 STAY SAFETY AWARE

If you're decorating a nursery, try to paint the walls at least a month before the room is used to ensure any odours are gone. 'Use non-VOC paints, including floor paints and varnishes,' says Jenny Dalton at online design magazine *LittleBig*. 'Or consider the Atmosphere Purifying Paint from Ecos, which neutralises pollutants in the air.' Avoid positioning a cot close to a radiator or window, as babies are sensitive to temperatures, and aim to keep the room around 18°C. In a toddler's room, make sure cupboards and shelves are securely screwed to walls in case they are used as an impromptu climbing frame, and don't position furniture next to a window. Use socket covers, tuck leads away, avoid tie-backs and ensure blind cords are out of reach.

#### HOT PRODUCT

### Pencils wallpaper

Once upon a time, if you wanted a mural you had to get busy with a paintbrush or call in a professional. Today, Mr Perswall will print any image onto wallpaper, and it has an amazing array of existing designs. We love Pen Pal from the Hide & Seek range, £27 per sq m.



This multifunctional cot bed features drawers, a changing table and shelving, then converts into a bed with a bedside cabinet and desk. A guest bed can be substituted for the roll-out drawers. £999, Rimobel at Trendy Products.

PHOTOGRAPHY (FACING PAGE, FROM LEFT) LARNIE NICOLSON STYLING LEEANN YARE; JOSÉ LUIS HAUSMANN

#### 3 MAINTAIN YOUR HOME'S MOOD

Decorating a child's room can be as exciting as doing up the rest of your home. 'A mistake parents often make is thinking a child's space has to be cutesy,' says Jane Bonsor at textile house Korla. 'Although it should be somewhere that kids can express themselves, it still needs to feel like



# Choose your **BEDROOM STYLE**



## Look 1 **FOLKSY AND FUN**

- \* **THE IDEA** Add a playful touch to a nursery with cheerful wall stickers. Available in hundreds of different designs, they are inexpensive and simple to apply. Plus they can easily be removed without leaving sticky marks, so are quick to update too.
- \* **GET THE LOOK** This is the Seasons **wall decal** by Wall Candy, £45, available at Funky Moose.



## Look 2 **ARTISTIC GALLERY**

- \* **THE IDEA** It's never too early to encourage children to curate their own gallery of artworks. Choose graphic prints and images that relate to a child's hobbies and interests for a sophisticated alternative to cartoon characters or twee motifs.
- \* **GET THE LOOK** For a good selection of original and inexpensive **artwork**, log on to etsy.com. Pick up boxy white **frames** at Ikea.



## Look 3 **DJ IN THE HOUSE**

- \* **THE IDEA** A cool kid's room doesn't have to mean black walls or outrageous colours. This stripy ceiling adds a funky edge that will please parents too. The same goes for framed vintage vinyl, which adds instant kudos for image-conscious teens.
- \* **GET THE LOOK** Try Chelsea stripe **wallpaper**, £59 per 10m roll, Cole & Son. Find **album frames**, £12 each, at Urban Outfitters.



## Look 4 **POPS OF PRETTY COLOUR**

- \* **THE IDEA** Transform the simplest of rooms in an instant with some well-chosen decorations. Try strings of colourful bunting, or hang bunches of pretty paper pom-poms together for maximum impact.
- \* **GET THE LOOK** For **pompoms** like these, head to Paperpoms, or find instructions to make your own at marthastewart.com. See the Bespoke Upholstered **footstool** by Alphabet Interiors at notonthehighstreet.com.



Combine cool design with elements that can be adapted as your child gets older



## Look 5 BOLD ACCENTS

- ✦ THE IDEA Make punchier shades work by combining colours with care. This royal-blue hue would look childish teamed with primary red, whereas accents of this juicy bright orange give a sharper, more modern feel.
- ✦ GET THE LOOK Laguna Bay **emulsion**, £13.49 for 1.5l, Crown, is a similar shade. Fatboy has bright orange **floor cushions**, £59 each.



## Look 6 ENTER WONDERLAND

- ✦ THE IDEA Many a little girl dreams of a princess bed, but if a four-poster is a little on the grand side, an inexpensive canopy adds a fairy-tale touch. Compromise on cutesy wallpaper by opting for a grown-up design that kids will love as well.
- ✦ GET THE LOOK See the Princess bed **canopy net**, £22.95, Mostique. This is Flamingos **wallpaper**, £62 per 10m roll, Cole & Son.



## Look 7 SMART STORAGE

- ✦ THE IDEA Maximise floor play space in a shared room by positioning twin beds end to end. These made-to-measure frames feature stacks of built-in storage, and their low-level design means they can be used as casual sofa-style seating too.
- ✦ GET THE LOOK To find a tradesman to build similar **beds**, log on to [ratedpeople.com](http://ratedpeople.com).



## Look 8 VINTAGE VIBE

- ✦ THE IDEA Greys are big news in grown-up interiors, and can work equally well in kids' rooms. These bold, tonal wall stripes provide a great neutral background, which can easily be updated with colourful textiles and accessories in any colour you choose.
- ✦ GET THE LOOK Walls in Night Jewels 1 to 6 **emulsion**, £24.29 for 2.5l, Dulux. **Day bed**, £299, Bump. **Duvet cover set**, £40, Feather & Black.



## THE KNOWLEDGE

### MAKE YOURS A TECHNO HOUSE



**MATTHEW TILLMAN**, managing partner of home-technology specialist Tillman Domotics, talks kids' rooms and beyond.

- Simplicity is key when it comes to family technology, otherwise it won't get used. Children are now far more involved in the operation of the home (and from a younger age), whether that means closing their blinds by remote control or accessing their own playlist from an iPhone, iPad or touch-screen panel on the wall. Everything needs to be user-friendly and intuitive – ideally there should be a maximum of two button pushes before the task is done.
- Parents can incorporate a 'going to bed' mode on the TV, internet and lights in a child's room, so they can be shut down from anywhere in the house. You can also install low-level LED lights to help kids find their way to the bathroom in the night.
- Real-time audio-visual monitoring allows you to focus a camera on a cot or bed. If there is movement or noise outside the bed area, a frame will pop up in the corner of your TV screen, or you can be sent a text message. This used to be an expensive business, but now these small cameras are relatively cheap, costing from £250 each.
- Cameras can also be installed near swimming pools, trampolines or fish ponds to help prevent accidents.
- Technology is particularly useful when it comes to parental control over TV, the internet and computer games. A virtual network will ensure children have restricted access to the web, even if they are on an iPad rather than a main computer, and can be programmed so kids are only allowed to surf at certain hours of the day or for limited lengths of time.
- Kaleidescape is an invaluable system for large families with lots of interests. It stores all your DVDs and Blu-rays on a central server, and they are available on screens around the house. You can create a profile for each of your kids so they only access the titles you want them to.
- Maximise space in a small bedroom and create a multifunctional media/playroom by installing TVs that pop up out of units, or swivel to reveal screens and gaming suites.

Transform tired floorboards with a lick of bright paint. Many companies now supply their colours in a hard-wearing finish suitable for floors. For a similar paint, try Lemon Mivvi, £49.50 for 2.5l, Little Greene.



## Focus on WALLS & FLOORS

Wallpaper, paint and carpet can work as key elements, setting a theme for the room, and they will endure if you choose cleverly

**P**aint is inexpensive and allows for easy updates. 'A neutral base can be adapted or themed with textiles, accessories and artwork as your child grows,' says Caterine Hooper of Little Baby Company. 'And don't just think neutral equals white. Greys and other muted shades work well too, and create a calm, relaxing atmosphere.'

- 'Research shows that babies sleep better in darker environments, so think beyond the usual nursery shades and consider dusky pink, grey-blue, mossy green and soft purples, which can be very soothing,' says LittleBig's Jenny Dalton.
- Older children may have very specific ideas about which colours they want, but try to avoid brash hues and classic primaries, which can look harsh. Compromise with a more sophisticated 'off' shade. 'Little girls will often want lots of bubblegum pink, for example,' says Jane Bonsor of Korla. 'Instead, suggest a paler, powdery colour, or perhaps just a touch of bright pink.'



A patchwork of samples or offcuts is a cheap and cheerful way to paper a wall, or use them to embellish cupboard doors. These wallpapers are from Danish company Retro Villa.





Add an extra layer of interest to a giant blackboard wall with brightly painted picture frames. Try International One-Coat **Blackboard Paint**, £11.99 for 750ml, Homebase, and paint frames with tester pots.



World map wallpaper or a mural will educate and excite young explorers – Digetex has a good range. Mark places they have visited or where friends live.

PHOTOGRAPHY (FACING PAGE, TOP) RENÉE FRINKING; STYLING MARLIES DOES; (BELOW) LA PETITE MAGAZINE; (THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE) AMANDA MICHELLE PHOTOGRAPHY; LARNIE NICOLSON STYLING; LEEANN YARE; CARPETRIGHT

Children grow out of the latest fads as quickly as their first pair of shoes, and cartoon or character-themed wallpaper and borders will date almost instantly. Luckily, there is a huge range of chic wallpapers designed for kids that grown-ups will love too. Look at Mini Moderns, Sandberg, Fern Living and Hibou Home. Wallpaper that has a picture-frame motif is a fun way to display photos – try Frames by Taylor & Wood at Graham & Brown, or the Eco Street collection by Eco Wallpaper.

Blackboard paint changes a wall into a giant, wipe-clean canvas for budding artists. Alternatively, paper one wall in inexpensive lining paper and let kids loose with markers and crayons.

A notice board is a great way to display photos, invitations and other memorabilia, and will save walls



Carpet with a bold design or bright colours can hide a multitude of sins. This is Trendy carpet in Red, White, Blue, £9.99 per sq m, Carpetright.

into the deep box art frames by Articulate Gallery, at Little Baby Company. It's an easy way to rotate drawings without having to re-frame them. Or use string and pegs to make a "washing line" of art and photos.

Get creative teens involved by suggesting they paint their own

murals. They could copy a design, or The Stencil Warehouse does custom stencil-cutting.

from damage. 'Create an extra-large pin board with a wall of cork tiles, ideal for teenagers who love to personalise their space,' says Jane Bonsor.

There are also lots of companies that can blow up photos or images to create unique artwork, wallpaper or a bespoke mural. For starters, try 55Max, Mr Perswall or Surface View.

'Kids love seeing their own art on the wall,' says Catherine Hooper. 'Drop different paintings

Wood flooring is more practical than carpet and its smooth surface is better suited to balancing toys, building towers and drawing on the floor,' says Ursula Wesseling of Room To Bloom. Wood can also be painted, either in cheerful colours or with motifs such as footprints or racing tracks for cars.

A bright rug will cushion knees and warm things up, and is an easy way to inject colour into a space. There are plenty of designs that double as play mats – look at examples from WovenGround, Kinderroom and Ikea.

Carpet is warm and soft, but choose a stain-resistant product that will cope with the inevitable spills and dirt.

'If your budget is tight, consider vinyl flooring,' says Ursula Wesseling. 'It's cheap, easy to clean and warm underfoot.' The Colour Flooring Company does plain, modern vinyl in contemporary colours.

**FYI**  
*The world's most expensive teddy bear was made by Steiff for Louis Vuitton and sold at auction in Monaco in 2000 for \$2.1m (£1.3m). It now lives a cosseted life at the Teddy Bear Museum in Jeju, Korea.*





Salvaged pieces such as old lockers are super-sturdy and create a cool industrial look. Try Steel Vintage for metal storage.



Outward-facing shelves make it easy for children to choose favourite books. Tidy Books makes a standing version for £119, or hire a carpenter at findacraftsman.com.

## Focus on STORAGE

Organised spaces can save your child's room from descending into chaos

**B**oxes and baskets are great for toys and games, and can easily be transported around the house. Peg labels on the front for quick identification, and keep one basket at the foot of the bed for toys that haven't found a home by bedtime. 'Old trunks, suitcases and crates also make good storage,' says Ursula Wesselingh of Room To Bloom. 'Mount them on castors for extra flexibility.'

■ 'To make it easier for children to tidy up, keep favourite toys, books and

clothing on easily accessible, child-height shelves and hooks, and place less frequently used items, or those that need supervision, higher up,' says Jenny Dalton of *LittleBig* magazine. Check out kitchen departments for pan rails with blunt butchers' hooks, which are a cost-effective way of getting things off the floor quickly.

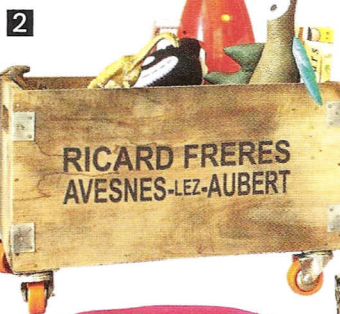
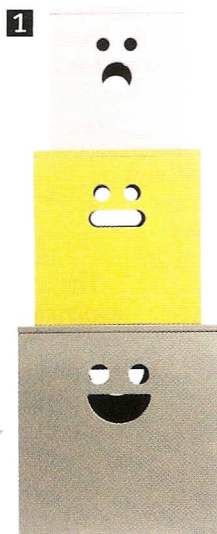
■ 'Kids love to arrange their belongings, and open shelving is ideal

for displaying favourite toys or showing off collections and awards,' says Jane Bonser of Korla.

■ Adjustable shelves will accommodate big picture books, then can be adapted to hold reference books and paperbacks later in life.

■ 'If budget allows, bespoke storage is a great way to make space work really hard,' says Catherine Hooper of Little Baby Company. 'Floor-to-ceiling cupboards take up relatively little floor area but provide stacks of storage. Or consider a lift-up window seat or a divan bed.'

## 5 OF THE BEST TOY BOXES



1 Face Painted **plywood boxes** (largest W30 x D30 x H30cm), £199.95 for set of three, Ferm Living at 95% Danish. 2 Rustic **storage box** on wheels (W45 x D32 x H30cm), £55, Rose & Grey. 3 Kids' **storage hamper** (Dia36 x H40cm), £22, Heal's. 4 Jackeline **basket** (Dia25 x H30cm), £19.99, Zara Home. 5 Deluna New York **trunk** (W49 x D30 x H31cm), £290, Bobo Kids.







Scaled-down furniture is best avoided as children soon outgrow it, but a **mini table and chairs** are exceptions as it gives kids their own play area. Child's Series 7 chair by Arne Jacobsen, from £385, Aram Store.

## Focus on FURNITURE

Choose good-quality, classic and multifunctional pieces that will see kids through to teenage years

A cot bed is a sound investment and will last until your child is ready for a regular bed. There are some stylish models available – look at the Sleepi by Stokke, the Leander cot bed and the Oeuf NYC Sparrow bed at Nubie.

■ For babies, a nappy-changing area is essential, but a changing table will only be used for a short time. A more versatile option is a chest of drawers topped with a changing mat.

■ Bunk beds are ideal for sleepovers and offer endless play opportunities. 'Bespoke mezzanines and platform beds can be designed to incorporate storage or a work space,' says *LittleBig's* Jenny Dalton. Or choose a truckle that pulls out from

under a single bed for when friends stay.

■ 'Second-hand furniture adds personality to a room,' says Catherine Hooper of Little Baby Company. 'Antique fairs, car-boot sales and eBay are good places to find affordable pieces, which can be updated with a lick of paint.'

■ 'Industrial-looking filing cabinets topped with Perspex make a cool desk,' says Jane Bonsor of Korla. Or if space is limited, try a fold-down desk.

■ Floor cushions and beanbags provide great low-level, flexible seating, which means the bed remains a dedicated sleep space.



Instead of a child-sized wardrobe, invest in clothes storage with shelves and hanging rails that can be adjusted as children grow. Try Circus Antiques for a similar wardrobe.

## SOURCE BOOK

### ONLINE INSPIRATION

- Little Baby Company [littlebabycompany.com](http://littlebabycompany.com)
- LittleBig [littlebigmagazine.com](http://littlebigmagazine.com)
- Tillman Domotics [tillmandomotics.com](http://tillmandomotics.com)

### INTERIOR DESIGN

- Room To Bloom [room-to-bloom.com](http://room-to-bloom.com)

### FURNITURE AND DECOR

- 55Max [55max.com](http://55max.com)
- Bobo Kids [bobokids.co.uk](http://bobokids.co.uk)
- Bump [bumpstuff.com](http://bumpstuff.com)
- Digetex [digetex.com](http://digetex.com)
- Eco Wallpaper [eco.se](http://eco.se)
- Ecos [ecospaints.com](http://ecospaints.com)
- Fatboy [fatboy.com](http://fatboy.com)
- Ferm Living [ferm-living.com](http://ferm-living.com)
- Funky Moose [funkymoose.co.uk](http://funkymoose.co.uk)
- Hibou Home [hibouhome.com](http://hibouhome.com)
- Holman Specialist Paints [holmanpaints.co.uk](http://holmanpaints.co.uk)
- In The Woodshed [inthewoodshed.co.uk](http://inthewoodshed.co.uk)
- Kinderroom [kinderroom.co.uk](http://kinderroom.co.uk)
- Korla [korlahome.com](http://korlahome.com)
- Leander [leander.com](http://leander.com)
- Mini Moderns [minimoderns.com](http://minimoderns.com)
- Mostique [mosqitonetsuk.co.uk](http://mosqitonetsuk.co.uk)
- Mr Perswall [mrperswall.co.uk](http://mrperswall.co.uk)
- Nubie [nubie.co.uk](http://nubie.co.uk)
- The Stencil Warehouse [stencilwarehouse.com](http://stencilwarehouse.com)
- Stokke [stokke.com](http://stokke.com)
- Surface View [surfaceview.co.uk](http://surfaceview.co.uk)
- Tidy Books [tidy-books.com](http://tidy-books.com)
- Trendy Products [trendy-products.co.uk](http://trendy-products.co.uk)

For further contacts, see our Stockists page

## Focus on LIGHTING

Use bright and functional lights to add mood and the fun factor



Pretty wall-mounted lamps add a decorative element and emit a gentle glow. These are the Smila Blomma lamps, £6 each, Ikea.

Fairy lights give a decorative touch as well as providing a source of gentle light. Hang up a pretty string around a mirror, curtain pole or a bed frame, or place a net of lights on the ceiling, making sure cables are safely tucked out of reach. LED versions are long-lasting and eco-friendly too.

Don't restrict yourself to products made for children. Look at the Pigeon light by Thorsten Van Elten, and check out Innermost and Rockett St George. Or consider neon lighting to make up a name. More affordable than a custom-made sign are individual letters, £45 each, from Seletti at The Letterroom. 'You can also use flexible LED rope lights to form letters or shapes,' says Ursula Wesselingh of Room To Bloom. 'These look effective against a dark wall.'

Teenagers need good task lighting for reading and homework. An Anglepoise is a design classic, or choose an oversized version as a fun floor lamp.