

ESSENTIAL GUIDE

COOL KIDS' ROOMS

Today's mini hipsters demand so much more than pastel tones from their living space. Follow these ideas and be inspired to create a room you'll love as much as they do

Words – Sarah Baldwin
Picture research – Nicole Rowe

Horizontal stripes in coastal colours give a beachy look that won't date. Team with a novelty bed for a scheme they will love. The Treehouse natural tree wood bed is by Francois Lamazeroles at The Conran Shop, £1,395 (excluding mattress). This is Plageau wallpaper is 110508 Teal, £42 per 10m roll, Landscapes collection at Harlequin



Decorating a bedroom, whether for a toddler or teenager, is rather like parenting itself: it requires serious balancing skills. Even interiors aficionados can lose their cool because, more than in any other part of the home, there are so many conflicting factors to consider. You might not mind a space where your little darlings express their personality or make their mark, for instance, but not if that means knock-knacks all over the floor, garish primary paints or a shrine to Harry Styles. Then there is the practical consideration of The Future: whatever you do may have to be adapted as they

grow. Plus, children use their bedrooms very differently from adults – rather than just somewhere to sleep, they're also where they play, create and (hopefully) study. Yet all these considerations needn't result in a bland, characterless space – instead, embrace the opportunity that designing for a child brings. "The most important thing is to have fun – this is the place you can be playful," says Ursula Wesselingh, interior designer and owner of children's décor company Room to Bloom. The aims are clear – furniture has to be hardy, storage is paramount and colour matters. Beyond that? Simply use your imagination...

Photography: Paul Massey/IPC - Sygma/Art

Choose their **BEDROOM STYLE**



GIRL'S NIGHT IN

THE IDEA Nothing will make a little princess smile more than a four-poster bed. Look for a vintage piece, such as this antique Balinese day bed, to avoid going over-cutesy. Team with pastel furnishings and ornate lighting for an eclectic look.

GET THE LOOK This day bed was bought in Bali – find similar at Opium, where an Antique Colonial bed costs £2,995. The portrait is by Linda Mason. For a similar desk, try Ikea's Micke, from £40. Finish with a Murano chandelier from Rainbow.



DOUBLE-HEIGHT DRAMA

THE IDEA Make use of walls with a multi-level bed. Customise the design to suit your needs: you could add a desk, shelves or hidden drawers. You don't need two kids for this to be a smart idea – one level could be dedicated to lounging or studying.

GET THE LOOK To find a tradesman to build a bunk design, use ratedpeople.com. For this paint colour, try Teal from Ecos's Nursery Paint range, £36.54 for 1l. The Winchelsea wooden chandelier, £1,625 at Oka, is a good match for this fixture.



THE BIG PICTURE

THE IDEA Create personality with playful illustrations, taking inspiration from their favourite characters or animals – it's an inexpensive way to add colour and humour. Customise furniture too, such as the black detailing on this wooden unit.

GET THE LOOK Danish graphic artist Marie Wilumsen painted this wall. You can use stencils – My Wonderful Walls sells cute designs such as the Flower Garden Wall Mural Stencil Kit, £63.39 at Etsy – or Bodie and Fou's wall stickers, from £42 each.



A BOLD MOVE

THE IDEA Work with monochromes for a space oozing with style that's also gender neutral. A rug will soften hard floors for little crawlers. One splash of colour, such as the yellow stripes on the ceiling here, adds a touch of fun.

GET THE LOOK This is the Oeuf NYC Sparrow cotbed, £541, from Nubie. The Joys Rocker, left, is by Monte Design, from £850. Fabrics & Papers has wide-stripe wallpaper designs – try the Eyebrow Striped, £43.81 per 10m roll.



WRITING ON THE WALL

THE IDEA For a look that can be constantly updated, cover one wall in blackboard paint – it's never too early to encourage them to be creative. Avoid a room that feels dark by teaming it with bright accessories and fabrics.

GET THE LOOK For blackboard paint with a difference, try Rust-Oleum's Magnetic Chalkboard, £14.99 for 750ml, Homebase. These are sofa.com's single Kandahar beds (on legs), £860, covered in Osborne & Little's Zagazoo fabric in Cockatoo.



ROOM TO GROW

THE IDEA Design a space for girls of all ages by opting for grown-up furniture, softened with easily updateable accessories, such as cushions and wall details.

GET THE LOOK Loaf's Willow single bed has a button-upholstered headboard, from £695. For a quilt floor cushion, try namedesignstudio's Patchwork covers, £62.76 each at Etsy. Vertbaudet has butterfly decorations, £12 for a pack for 14. Zara Home's Rabbit table lamp, £79.99, is similar to this bedside light.



PATTERN MASH-UP

THE IDEA Bold prints work in a child's room but, for a future-proof space, stick to grown-up options, such as stripes, geometrics or botanicals. Give it some funk by introducing clashing patterns and choosing an acid-bright for curtains or fabrics.

GET THE LOOK Design studio MissPrint is a trove for stylish wallpapers, from £59.95 per 10m roll. Team with Paprika curtains from Harlequin's Amiee Silks range, £31.20 per m. Urban Outfitters's vibrant graphic rugs complete the look.



THE DARK SIDE

THE IDEA Add instant cool with moody paintwork. Use one lead colour and one accent – off-black and orange may even appeal to hormonal teenagers. Another trick is to divide space according to function – this change in level separates sleep and study.

GET THE LOOK A paint colour similar to this is Fired Earth's Mercury, £49.50 for 2.5l. This wall storage system is Uten Silo by Vitra, from £208 at Aram Store. For an orange desk light, see Jeldé's Signal table lamp, £189 at Made in Design.



BEFORE YOU START

Combine form with function for a perfectly child-friendly space

PLANNING MAKES PERFECT, so get practical aspects absolutely right before you start decorating. Is the bedroom for one child or two? Will it double as a playroom? Think of everything right down to 'Are there sufficient plug sockets?' before getting creative.

SET A MOOD. Although it needs to feel like part of the home, you can opt for bolder schemes here. 'Fun floors, walls and storage solutions are a must for kids' rooms,' says Lucy St George, founder of Rockett St George. 'I have always gone for patterns. I love vintage wallpapers and a kitsch retro style – something I would never indulge in other spaces in the house.'

SUPER-TOUGH FINISHES such as durable paints and flooring are essential. 'Make it bright and fun for children – but practical and hard-wearing for parents,' says David Mottershead, managing director at Little Greene. 'The last thing you want to do is worry about sticky fingers and marks.'

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE NEED FOR STORAGE – from clothes and toys to sports kit, children come with a lot of baggage. A bank of fitted cabinets is ideal, but if you choose freestanding, ensure cupboards and shelves are securely fixed to walls. 'Before you think about storing anything, consider whether you really want to keep it,' says Ashlyn Gibson, author of *Creative Family Home* (£19.99, Ryland Peters & Small).

DON'T MAKE TECHNOLOGY AN AFTERTHOUGHT or you'll end up with messy cables. 'Plan space for a computer with Wi-Fi,' says interior designer Thomas Griem. If you decide to give your child a TV, think about putting it into a cupboard so that it can be hidden away. Consider fitting parental controls on all their devices.

Essential elements WALLS AND FLOORS

Inject life with statement shades and patterns

Spaces with great colour are so much more interesting than all-white rooms and, as paint is inexpensive to update, you can be as bold as you dare. That's not to say it needs to be vibrant – layer greys or ecru for a calm yet standout scheme. Allow your child to have a say, but try to steer them away from classic primaries, as these can look brash. 'It must be cool! Opt for smart, upmarket hues, rather than pastels,' says interior designer Charlotte Crosland. It's best to avoid going for a theme from a film or book as children are fickle and by the time the room's finished, they could well have lost interest.

Wallpaper is another way to add colour. Patterned paper is especially forgiving – scuffs and marks almost vanish. 'Traditional soft pinks and pale hues for younger kids always please parents and children alike, while stripes are timeless and can be adapted,' says Claire Vallis, design director at Harlequin. There is a range of stylish designs currently on the market that successfully cross the infant-to-adult boundary. For bespoke, check out the custom offerings from 55Max, Mr Perswall or Surface View, who will all blow up photos to make wallpaper or artwork.

Pay particular attention when decorating a room for a teenager. 'During these years, the bedroom plays a crucial role,' says Sarah Cole, marketing director at Farrow & Ball. 'It's the one place they can add their own stamp.' Cole recommends either calming hues, such as pinks with hints of grey, or bold prints or shades. You could also encourage them to get creative by painting a mural – The Stencil Warehouse could create a custom design.

Once you've settled on a scheme, pay attention to products. Look for paints that are low in VOCs, the toxins emitted when it dries. 'Children, newborns and those suffering from asthma and allergies will all benefit,' explains Rishi Subeathar, founder of Eico, which specialises in zero-VOC paint. With eco products, look out for the acrylic content, which means that they can withstand a wipe-down.

Practicality is key with floor coverings too – wood is more durable than carpet. 'Particularly for children's spaces, you need a floor that promotes healthy living,' says Steve Malby, managing director of Junckers. 'Natural floors are superior – solid, pre-finished hardwoods have a smooth surface that won't harbour dust mites.' Cover with a rug or play mat. If you choose carpet, look for a stain-resistant version. One affordable, hard-wearing floor choice is vinyl – The Colour Flooring Company has a range of stylish shades.

RIGHT Layer whimsical patterns and textures for a feminine space. This is Designers Guild's Meadowsweet wallpaper in Poppy, £30 per 10m roll. **BELOW** Black with white screams cool. For paint, try Farrow & Ball's Pitch Black with All White, both £34.50 for 2.5l of emulsion



Photography (clockwise from top left): Michael Weber Styling Design Group/gradynyc.com; Photography (room with orange floor) Paul Moseley/PCP - Syndication

Choose hard-wearing materials, such as vinyl or rubber. U-Fit Rubber Flooring's Round Stud Tiles, £41.95 per sq m, have a similar look

Shopping CHILDREN'S WALLPAPER

Big prints for hip little people

Maataska wallpaper in Bubblegum, £102 per 4.5m roll, Aimée Wöder

Fayre's Fair wallpaper in Lido, £45 per 10m roll, Mini Moderns

Birdhouse wallpaper, £90 per 3m roll, Studio Dittle at Bobo Kids

Robot wallpaper, £58 per 10m roll, Ferm Living at Cloudberry Living

Origami wallpaper, £67 per 3m roll, Dotter & Sonur

It's A Puzzle wallpaper in Blue and White, £60 per 10m roll, PaperBoy Wallpaper

Tree Tops wallpaper in Teal/Ivory, £36 per 10m roll, Madison collection at Sanderson

All My Books wallpaper, £30 per 10m roll, All About Me by Harlequin

Claudia wallpaper in Pink, £65 per 10m roll, Sandberg

EDITED CHOICE

Shopping CHILDREN'S BEDS

They will never get out of the wrong side of bed with one of these stylish designs

Research - Lucy Gough



Storå pine loft bed, £220 (excluding mattress), Ikea

Julian MDF and laminate bed in Sky Blue with pull-out bed, from £1,330 (excluding mattresses), Go Modern



Nicolas painted-iron bed in Red, £189 (excluding mattress), Maisons du Monde



Alma solid-birch Mini Crib set in Gala Green, £300, Bloom at John Lewis



Compton MDF Cabin Station, £525 (excluding mattress), Next Home

Livingetc
LOVES

Stockholm pine bed with optional four-poster kit, £699 (excluding mattress), Chic Shack



Candy cotton bed, £2,880 (excluding cushions), Bonaldo at Chaplins



Delfi solid maple wood cot, from £1,400, Axstudio at Asat

Angelica single brushed-linen cotton bed in Aubergine, £745 (excluding mattress), sofa.com



Arcadia Modern tulip wood sleigh cot, £1,795 (excluding mattress), Bambai at Bouff



Mint ash wood bed, £1,044 (excluding mattress), Places and Spaces

Buyer's guide to KIDS' BEDS

CHOOSING A DESIGN

There are hundreds of funky buys on the market, but bear in mind how quickly your child's tastes will change. 'Invest in a piece of great design that will last, that is practical for when they're young, but also sophisticated enough for them as a teen,' advises Karine Kong, founder and creative director of Bodie and Fox. If you have the space - and the budget - it might be tempting to buy a novelty bed, but these are often pricey and some might date. 'Choosing a classic style with an upholstered headboard means you can update the look of their room as they grow up,' says Emma Drew, marketing manager at sofa.com.

COT CONSIDERATIONS

A baby is likely to stay in a cot until they're two or three years old. Brand-new buys should conform to BS EN 716-2:2008 standard - this ensures that the product is deep enough to be safe, that the bars are the correct distance apart and that the cot does not have cut-outs or steps. If yours is second-hand or borrowed, make sure the distance between each bar is no less than 2.5 and no more than 5cm.

SIZE DOES MATTER

Height and length are major considerations: it's preferable for you to get a standard-length bed so that you don't face the 'growing-out' problem. Look for designs with detachable legs in several heights that allow you to adjust it - safety can be an issue for young kids if the bed is too far off the ground. 'Young children grow really quickly, so it can be handy - and cheaper - to buy something extendable that will keep up with the growing child,' says Philippa Swain, business sales leader at Ikea.

MATTRESS SELECTION

Invest in a quality product, as growing children need that extra support. A medium to firm coil-sprung mattress is ideal for a kid's bed. 'A spring system, such as Silentnight's Miracoli, is a must to provide support for their spinal development, as it helps to align a child's back as they sleep,' says Claire Fenton, brand manager at Silentnight. 'A rod-edged mattress will also provide growing bodies with additional comfort.'

BUNKS AND HIGH SLEEPERS

Stacked sleeping helps to make the most of the floor area while creating extra sleeping options. For flexibility, look for bunk designs that you can also split into two singles as well as those with left- or right-ladder fixing options. High sleepers double up bed space with seating, work stations, etc.

Essential elements STORAGE

Create order out of chaos with clever designs and practical buys

Whether it's presents, toys, clothes or sports equipment, with every child comes a mountain of paraphernalia. The best solution for this is a mix of display shelving, fixed cupboards and moveable boxes or trunks. 'It's nice to have some open shelves so that they can display their favourite things and switch them round as they grow out of them,' says Karine Kong, founder and creative director of Bodie and Fou.

Encourage children to do their own tidying with shelves or hooks that are at their height. 'A trick that never fails is to use colourful tubs placed within arm's reach,' says Amanda Short, founder of Nuble. 'Let the kids choose what to place in each - it makes tidying up more fun, plus they will also know where to find things.' Calligaris recently launched some colourful solutions, or try re-purposing vintage items, such as salvaged lockers.

'When floor space is limited, plump for wall-hung designs,' says Christopher Lusty, managing director of Aspace. 'Shelves are ideal for books and toys. Additionally, in bedrooms with limited square footage, choose units that can be placed vertically.' Much of the practical gubbins you'll need to store will solely lack visual appeal, so plan concealed storage. If your budget allows, bespoke cabinetry will utilise every inch of space. Also think of places where you can hide larger items, such as under the bed - many stylish buys have built-in drawers.

fyi

Famous toy store Hamleys turns 254 this year. Even five hits during WW2's Blitz didn't stop it trading - sporting tin hats, staff grabbed all the goods and served customers from the front door.



Low-level shelving encourages tots to tidy. Stack several metal filing drawers, £39.99 each from Vintage Industrial Furniture, to emulate the look of this cabinet



Bespoke joinery can make the most of your space. Ask a carpenter to design a bed for you with drawers underneath - to find a certified one, visit findcraftsman.com

5 of the
BEST
toy boxes



Safari cardboard trolley, £29.99, Zara Home



Pull-Along MDF book cart in Rainbow Star, £38, Great Little Trading Co.



Triangle cotton and leather handle storage bag, £59, Ferm Living at Nuble



Indian mango wood dowry box in Pink and White, £255, Loaf



Kissing Stags Steamer trunk, £225; and Kissing Rabbits tuck box, £135, both in coated canvas on hardwood with solid brass fittings, Anorak



Ample room to work, plus sufficient storage makes organisation possible. Ikea sells a range of well-priced buys, such as Komplement baskets, £30 for a set of three

Essential elements STUDY AREAS

From the alphabet to algebra, get them swotting early on with these nifty ideas

Whether it's colouring and crafts or Facebook and maths, every child needs a worktable. Planning one into the bedroom area means that projects can be left out without cluttering up your living areas.

Encourage creativity in younger children with art areas and easels. String up pots filled with crayons and fit outward-facing shelves to make choosing books easy. 'A child-sized table and chair encourages children to develop powers of concentration and to zone out of the world around them,' says Ashlyn Gibson, author of *Creative Family Home*. 'Look out

for old school furniture in junk or reclamation shops.' Older kids need a functional space for serious studying, room for a computer and good lighting, such as an Anglepoise. 'Make sure it's easy for your child to stay organised,' says Kasia Drymer, showroom manager of Living in Space. 'Drawers and stationery organisers keep things neat and provide a comfortable, inviting environment.' Get them involved in making a space they won't mind spending time in. Nobieboards lend a cool, personal touch - the World Map corkboard, £21 from E-Store, is a great buy. A second chair means you or their friends can sit with them to talk.

SOURCE BOOK

Interior design

- Charlotte Crosland charlottecrosland.com
- Living in Space living-in-space.co.uk
- Room to Bloom room-to-bloom.com
- Thomas Griem tg-studio.co.uk

Furniture and accessories

- Anglepoise anglepoise.com
- Anorak anorakonline.co.uk
- Aram Store aram.co.uk
- Aspace aspace.co.uk
- Bambizi bambizi.co.uk
- Bodie and Fou bodieandfou.com
- Calligaris calligaris.co.uk
- The Conran Shop conranshop.co.uk
- E-Store e-store.co.uk
- Etsy etsy.com
- Great Little Trading Co. gltc.co.uk
- Ikea ikea.com
- John Lewis johnlewis.com
- Linda Mason lindamason.com
- Loaf loaf.com
- Made in Design madeindesign.co.uk
- Marie Wilkamsen mariewilkamsen.dk
- Monte Design Group montedesign.net
- Nuble nuble.co.uk
- Oka okadirect.com
- Opium opiumshop.co.uk
- Rainbow rainbowlondon.com
- Rockett St George rockettstgeorge.co.uk
- Silentnight silentnight.co.uk
- sofa.com sofa.com
- Urban Outfitters urbanoutfitters.co.uk
- Vertbaudet vertbaudet.co.uk
- Vintage Industrial Furniture vintageindustrialfurniture.co.uk
- Vitra vitra.com
- Zara Home zarahome.com

Paints, papers and flooring

- Aimee Wilder aimeewilder.com
- Bobo Kids bobokids.co.uk
- Cloudberry Living cloudberryliving.co.uk
- The Colour Flooring Company colourflooring.co.uk
- Designers Guild designersguild.com
- Dotir & Sonur dotirandsonur.com
- Ecos Organic Paints ecospaints.com
- Eico eico.co.uk
- Fabrics & Papers fabricsandpapers.com
- Farrow & Ball farrow-ball.com
- Ferm Living fermliving.com
- 55Max 55max.com
- Fired Earth firedearth.com
- Harlequin harlequin.uk.com
- Homebase homebase.co.uk
- Junckers junckers.co.uk
- Little Greene littlegreene.com
- Mini Moderns minimoderns.com
- MissPrint missprint.co.uk
- Mr Perswall mrserswall.co.uk
- My Wonderful Walls mywonderfulwalls.com
- PaperBoy Wallpaper paperboywallpaper.co.uk
- Sandberg sandbergab.se
- Sanderson sanderson-uk.com
- The Stencil Warehouse stencilwarehouse.com
- Surface View surfaceview.co.uk
- U-Fit Rubber Flooring ufitrubberflooring.com