

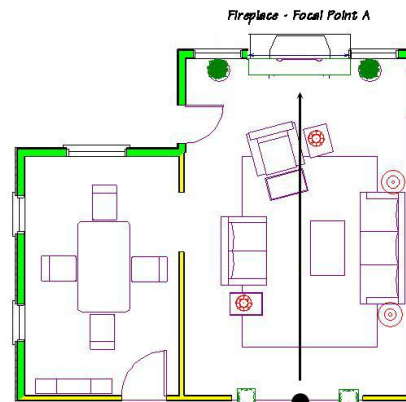
Decorating to Sell?

Finesse the Focal Points

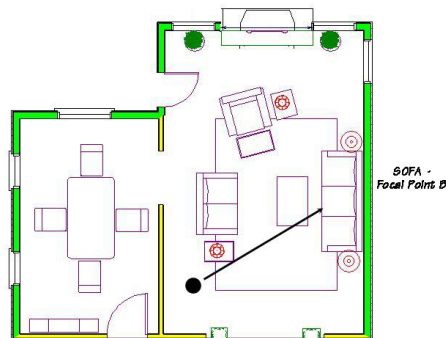
What really makes a home's interior appealing to a potential buyer? Is it the lighting? The paint color? The way furniture is arranged or the accessories? There are so many elements of design that contribute to a home's beauty that many owners give up before they even get started—decorating can be that overwhelming. “I don't really know what needs to be done or where to get started” are comments I hear so often during an initial interview with a client, especially from sellers who need to make a home as appealing as possible in a competitive market.

The answer is relatively simply: stop worrying about every wall and corner of the house and just concentrate on the focal points. First impressions are extremely important in the real estate market so nearly every room that a potential buyer sees on her first tour should have a “wow” factor. And the best place to create it is in the focal points: A. the first thing she sees when approaching the room and B. the place her eyes come to rest after entering the room.

To find the first focal point, enter the room as if you were on a tour of your own home. Without turning, what is the first thing you see? The feature in front of you is one of the areas you should concern yourself with decorating. If a room has other formal entryways from which a buyer will be approaching, you'll need to address those too and perhaps some focal points will be the same.

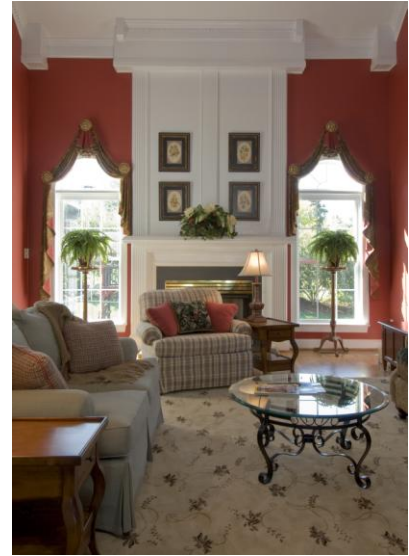


Continuing in or through the room on your tour, what is the next thing you see? It's likely that a large feature or piece of furniture captures your attention for several moments. This could be a sofa or bed against a large wall, a window, a fireplace, bookcase, piano, large dresser, etc. This is the other kind of focal point that needs your attention. Sometimes it may help to have your real estate agent or a decorator with a fresh set of eyes walk through your



home and identify these significant areas.

Once you've located the focal points, your next step is to create an attractive arrangement using a combination of furniture, wall decorations, lighting, and accessories, much of which you may already have in your home. Designing a visually pleasing display will allow the buyer to unconsciously "excuse" other areas of the room that may not be as appealing and perhaps prevent her from noticing minor discrepancies altogether. It also sends the message that each room has been lovingly tended to and that the owners have enjoyed living in it. Strange as it may seem, these subtleties are quick to penetrate the buyer's psyche and can affect her decision making. Keep in mind, however, that impressive displays will not go so far as to excuse clutter, mess or dirt.



The key to creating an attractive display in the focal point is symmetry or balance. The human eye seeks order and harmony and providing it in even a simple arrangement will satisfy nearly every viewer. A fireplace, for example, is a great location to create a symmetrical display. Start with a large mirror, painting or cluster of pictures and flank pairs of accessories on either side. A large window in the middle of a wall can be framed with drapes and a pair of upholstered chairs. Not every focal point will lend itself to symmetry so creating a visually balanced display will provide the equilibrium the human eye needs. A wall with a tall window in the corner can be balanced with a tall plant or screen in the opposite corner. If you have a heavy piece of furniture on one side of the composition, then a large picture or a cluster of heavily framed ones on the other will stabilize it.

Denise Britti is an interior decorator in Winston-Salem, NC. In May 2008, she received a first place award in Window Fashions Magazine's "Envision Design" contest and has been published in both the Triad and Washington, D.C. areas.