

Choosing furniture: When selecting indoor furniture, be sure to take into account future needs as well as comfort and style, feng shui expert Nina Kati tells Metro Herald's **RUTH DORIS**

Furnish to suit your own lifestyle

If you're thinking about treating your home to a make-over, remember that as well as complementing your interior, furniture should be functional and long-lasting. So avoid the latest trends and keep in mind your needs and those of your family for now and into the future.

Start with the focal point of each room. For instance, for the living area in winter, place seating around a fireplace, and put couches and chairs facing French windows during the summer.

'Balance and harmony are key to a healthy and restful home,' says interior designer Nina Kati.

The scheme does not need to be minimalist, or bare, but natural materials and soft colours will help create a more relaxing ambience.

Kati, who combines the Chinese principles of feng shui with interior design, believes uncluttered surfaces and furniture with smooth edges will make your living space a more pleasant place to be.

Comfort is the priority for the family room, so sofas and chairs should be upholstered to provide comfort and help soften acoustics.

Position seating to encourage conversation, either opposite each other or in a U-shape and close enough so everyone can join in easily.

But avoid seating anyone with their back to a door, as it is considered confrontational to see the back of someone's head when entering a room.

Low furniture, especially oval or rounded shapes, creates an informal relaxed atmosphere. Choose pieces made from natural wood, as it tends to give a room a soft effect.

Tall items of furniture, such as heavy bookcases that look like they're about to topple over at any minute, should be avoided as they can overwhelm a room, Nina says.

But don't be afraid to be creative – all matching furniture can look too contrived, whereas an eclectic mix can give a softer effect.



Small spaces: This seat doubles as storage

When selecting items, always consider space and light. For example, in small rooms opt for items which take up less space visually such as low, transparent coffee tables, or leave space on bookshelves to give the impression of spaciousness.

Allow plenty of room to move, as space between and under furniture lets energy flow through the space.

Furniture should be flexible and adaptable. If you're short of space or your budget is tight, go

for dual or multi-functional pieces, such as an extendable dining table or a wooden chest which can be used as storage for magazines and newspapers, and with cushions on top so it can double up as a window seat.

Consider a futon-style couch or day-bed that can be used as a sleeping space for overnight guests.

But remember, furniture is an investment, so it's worth buying the best you can afford. www.workingwonders.ie

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