

First of all, I want to give you a warm welcome, to the Laurel Home Blog. I'm Laurel Bern the author and publisher, and an interior designer since 1988. The LH blog began in 2012 and by 2015, became a full-time job which I love. We have a lot of fun here. So, please feel free to leave kind comments after the blog posts.

99% of the time you will receive a blog post from me on Wednesday morning and Sunday morning. The Friday Hot Sales are optional, and you will have the ability to opt-out of them and still remain subscribed to the blog.

As a means of saying thank you for subscribing please accept this free gift; a detailed report where we will go over 21 of the most hideous, and sometimes hideously costly interior decorating and design mistakes.

Oops! I meant *mistakes*, of course. ;]

Oh, we all make them. Believe me. I've made a lot more than 21.

Hopefully, this report will help you learn from my mistakes, as well as others I commonly see. Some of these mistakes are either very costly. Or, you'll just have to live with it.

**How many interior design mistakes have I made?**

Well, we don't need to go there. haha. However, if you'd like to read about 15 truly horrendous mistakes I made with [fabric and upholstery materials, please go here](#). (This link goes to my blog post.)

**So, really, it should be 36 hideous interior decorating mistakes.**

*\*\*\*One thing that will be helpful to know is that as you are going through this guide, I will be linking to numerous relevant blog posts that give further explanation about the topic. That way, if you wish to learn more, you can, or you can come back and read the post later.*

Okay, there's a lot to cover, so let's jump into the 21+ interior design mistakes that could cause your room or space to end up being something you don't want.

## **Interior design mistake #1**

Thinking that you can do EVERYTHING on your own.

- Doctors ask their colleagues for opinions.
- Designers ask their colleagues for opinions too!

Even if you are doing most of your decorating on your own, I can't stress enough the importance of [getting a professional pair of interior design eyes on your project](#), and the earlier, the better. In addition, having a trained pair of eyes on an hourly basis, is money well-spent.

### **Which is worse?**

- Spending \$2,000 for professional interior design advice.
- Spending \$20,000 or more to fix a colossal mistake.

I promise you will not regret it; [unless the interior decorator is a clueless toad](#).

Most are not; and the ones who you would do well to steer clear of generally reveal that early on.

**For tips on what to look for when hiring an interior designer, please check out:**

[I Think My Interior Decorator Might Be Ripping Me Off.](#)

[My Interior Designer Fired Me. What Did I Do Wrong?](#)

Still, most of my colleagues are talented and ethical. Ask for references and look at their work first. Most designers will consult in two-hour increments. Expect to pay a minimum of \$350.00 up to \$1,000.00 for a 2-hour service.

Although, this well-known designer charges \$2,000 for a 55-minute consult.

Yes, you read that right. Is she worth it? Well, she's very talented is all I'm going to say.

**Interior design mistake #2 is one of the most common.**

### **The furniture Doesn't Fit In The Room.**

That's because you thought you could do everything on your own. ;) A common mistake is to proceed without having a clear plan. Yes, I've done this, too, so don't beat yourself up. However, you plunked your money down on furniture that you CANNOT RETURN.

And, It seems that there's a trend for houses to be getting smaller and furniture to be getting bigger and bigger! Oh, we've been through this before.

And, here too, with some interior designs, you'll regret. But, I can't tell you how many times I've been in clients' homes where the furniture **did not** fit in the room; or the furniture was so

BIG, BLOATED and BULKY one could hardly move through the space.

**OR, they couldn't get it through the door, or, up or down the stairs.**

It's so awful when that happens. (I've each of those mistakes, too.)

Oh, so many interior design mistakes wouldn't happen if only we had a thorough and cohesive decorating plan.

Walking into a furniture store without having a crystal clear blueprint for what one needs is a recipe for disaster. And yet, how many people go shopping with their floor plan and measurements in hand? A few, perhaps.

But, the majority have no clue what furniture they want to get before they go shopping.

**But, professional interior designers decorate their client's homes by first creating a solid plan.**

Actually, it's the same as building a home.

Your architect will draw in great detail every inch of your new home. And he'll revise as many times as is necessary to get it right. He even has to submit his **PLAN** to a town, most likely.

It's the same when furnishing your home. It's an important step. However, by making a strong decorating plan before you step one foot in a furniture store, or online, you will avoid making a lot of costly mistakes.



Above is an example of the furniture-not-fitting interior design mistake that is almost not a mistake. It looks like the people



found a sectional and tried to make it work in this space. Unfortunately, the doors are jammed right into the arm.

Alas, this is another situation that if they had worked with a designer, they might've been able to come up with a different solution for the doors, plus a few other minor details.



Above in this gorgeous library by [Jeanette Whitson](#) is a sectional designed to fit perfectly in the space. Yes, this custom piece is expensive. But, I recommend checking (and double-checking) the dimensions of your furniture before purchasing.

**Interior design mistake #3 isn't talked about much.**

But I think it's the reason that [there's so much bad design out there. Remember the phony "French" kitchens?](#)

**Decorating your own home or someone else's without having a basic understanding of historical styles is IMO, a very bad idea.**

I believe that all great design is based on [classical architecture and proportion](#). And, that includes modern and contemporary furnishings, as well. If your desire is to be a professional interior decorator, Historical Styles is super important course to have under your belt.

**Understanding the historical styles of [architecture](#) and furniture will give a solid foundation of understanding how to create a classical furnishings scheme.**

[There's more about classical furniture here.](#) And you will learn the [difference between modern and contemporary and how to mix those furniture pieces with "traditional" furniture.](#)



In fact, these terms are so frequently misunderstood and can be subjective. Therefore, it's probably better to create a dialog instead of a label.

**Related to historical styles is another critical issue and it is one of scale.**

This is a topic that is brought up numerous times throughout the Laurel Home Blog.

[One of my biggest pet peeves is calling a sofa with a skirt - traditional.](#) There is nothing traditional about a sofa with a skirt. And, not to say that there's anything wrong with a sofa with a skirt.



Rose Tarlow chairs with skirt

But, are these chairs traditional? No, they are not; these chairs with lovely waterfall skirts from Rose Tarlow are stylish and classic, yet they are contemporary.



I don't know how to classify a sofa like the one above. I know everyone calls this traditional. But, what tradition are we mimicking? (The answer is nothing.)

Below are a couple of examples of traditional sofas:

**Early sofas, called Canapés (in French), did not have skirts.**

Nor, did the English furniture of the 18th century, we base our “traditional” styling on.



An antique Chippendale or Hepplewhite sofa is traditional.



So is this classic Chippendale sofa.

The sofa above, one of a pair, is not vintage. But, they are an authentic copy of an 18th-century Chippendale sofa. (of the period)

Understanding classical styles is crucial for understanding beautiful proportion and scale, which I think is frequently missing in today's furniture. [For one of my favorite posts about classical proportions, please go here.](#)

**Number 4 on our list is not having a sense of entrance, as you enter a room.**

Creating a sense of entrance is an important design rule I did learn in interior design school. Thank you so much, dear Maggie Cohen, my space planning instructor in 1988!

Usually, not having a sense of entrance comes about when the furniture is facing away from the main entrance. Sometimes this is unavoidable.

Sometimes the furniture is too big, or there's too much of it. Scale is a vital element of good interior design. It can't be mentioned often enough.





Why is this photo so weird, you ask?

Long story. lol. Let's move on...

[Creating a sense of entrance is crucial in space planning.](#)

With the space above, I cannot see how to enter this space, and it might be fine if the primary entrances are from the sides of the room.

However, if the main entrance is from behind the sectional, this is no bueno. It's not very gracious to have to walk around a big piece of furniture to sit down.

In addition, the seating configuration must make for a good conversation grouping.

### **Number 5 on the list of interior design mistakes:**

You have a plan, yes, but it's not a good plan. It's not good because everything matches all of the other pieces.

Like, I'm just going to trot on over to Bob's Discount Furniture and get me a matched set of dining room furniture *for only \$4,794.38 (70% price SLASH BLOWOUT SACRIFICE!), which includes FREE SHIPPING!!!*

Big eye roll here. Please remember that there is no such word as FREE anything in the furniture industry, much [less free shipping](#). Shipping is massively expensive and is worked into the mark-up.

Believe me. There is no sacrifice, whatsoever.

If your budget is meager, I fully understand. Here's one of my favorite posts about [how to score free or nearly free furniture](#).

**I'm all for recycling furniture if funds are tight.**



Just know, when it comes to decorating, I feel pretty strongly that the words "matched set" need to be obliterated from the land!

**And, while we're at it. The so-called "traditional" "Queen Anne" dining room set above is NOT Queen Anne!**





These are late Queen Anne dining chairs from the early 20th century. Technically, that makes them Queen Anne-style as the Queen Anne period was from 1700-1760. Still, Please notice that they are only 37.5" high, not 45" high! And, they are made from [Burr Walnut, which is quite beautiful](#).

Yes, they're a lot more money. I'm all for [cheap furniture \(that doesn't look cheap\)](#). But the matchy faux Queen Anne-style furniture in the dining room is a *mistake*. Of course, there's much worse. But, my original point is no matching furniture sets, please. [Remember the woman whose husband insisted that everything matches?](#)

[The best rooms look like they evolved. Right?](#)

Well, I think so. I know; it's not easy to do, but I've come up for some tips for that, too.

[Here's a formula I created recently about how to achieve the eclectic mix.](#)

**Interior design mistake #6 is lining everything up against the wall. That is if you have walls. ;]**



Plus, we have another matched set of ersatz, fake, phony so-called "traditional" furniture.

[You can see more of the same and even worse, here.](#)

[Here's a good post on bedroom decorating ideas.](#)

## **Interior decorating mistake #6 is *too much symmetry*.**

While we should strive for a balanced, symmetrically pleasing design, too much symmetry can make a room feel contrived, stagnant, and tiresome.

I have to be careful when I put up examples of doing it wrong because sometimes it's a fine line.

By too much symmetry, I mean there are two of the same for practically everything. The room is like 20 pairs of identical twins!

Mirrors, lamps, sconces, chests, candlesticks, urns, chairs, occasional tables, floor lamps... And, especially any vignettes, like on top of a mantel.

### **So, what is the limit on pairs?**

Good question. Maybe up to five or six +/-, with lots of single items. If it's an entire room, I think it's okay to have more pairs than if it's a smaller area.

And, also it's good to have some symmetrical balance without it being identical. Sometimes, just mixing up the accessories is all that's necessary. I think [the post on bookshelf styling](#) gives a good idea of how to create a symmetrical balance.



Below is an excellent example of symmetry that is pleasing without going overboard.



Above we can see that the main furniture is balanced but different. Plus, there are a lot of single pieces as well. Those etageres are way cool!



[James T Farmer](#) always gets his symmetrical balance exactly right. And, he's also a master with color.

**Interior design mistake #7. Nothing matches. It looks like you're having a garage sale.**

There is no coordination. Anything goes. That's no good, either.

[For more of my furniture favorites, click here.](#)



Please also check out this [page for more obsessively curated furniture, lighting, and all home furnishings.](#)

And, if you're [looking for bargains, please shop my hot sales pages!](#)



### Michael Bastian

Above is an excellent example of symmetrical balance. This is more difficult to achieve, I think. I realize that some will think

this is too busy. But for this collected style, this vignette is well done. In photos, rooms can appear busier than in real life.

**LIGHTING presents many challenges and can contribute to many interior decorating mistakes**

**Mistake #8 The chandelier is too big.**



This is a pretty room, but this chandelier is way too big for this very skinny table. Actually, the table is ridiculously skinny and, in this case, probably the more significant problem! Your guests,



with busted knee caps may well decline your next dinner invitation.

Here are some [great ideas for inexpensive but great-looking chandeliers?](#)

A good rule of thumb for dining chandeliers: The diameter should not exceed the table's width by about 10" or so.

Therefore, if your table is 42" wide, I would not do a chandelier more than 32" in diameter-- tops.

## **Interior decorating mistake #9**

**This chandelier is also hung a bit too low, or too high.**

A good rule for the height of the chandelier is about 30" above the table. Sometimes it can be a bit lower. Or, it can be higher if the ceiling is higher than nine feet.

By the way, if you're interested and don't have it, [I created a PDF guide that gives some 333 rules and tips for decorating.](#)

I think this chandelier is too low, so after your guests have busted their knee-caps they will get up and give themselves a nasty bump on their head. They are definitely not coming back.

In addition, you should have at least one foot between the tallest point of the chandelier and the ceiling as an absolute minimum.

So, if you have an 8' ceiling, the maximum height of your chandelier or pendant can only be about 24" tall. Table height is at  $30'' + 30'' + 24'' + 12'' = 96''$

**Mistake #10 The chandelier is too small. But better too small, than too big.**



This [chandelier is too high](#), as well. Although, I think that this is a beautiful dining room. One other consideration is room size and ceiling height. This is a generous dining room with a large table; the table is probably about 42-45" wide.

**The room height is about 9' to the ceiling.**

This chandelier looks to be about 24" in diameter. I think that a good size diameter chandelier for this table would be an absolute minimum of 28" (and with more going on than this, like some crystals) but more like 30-34". It also needs to come down about 12-18" +/- . Hard to see exactly from a photo.

A good rule of thumb to use loosely for chandelier diameter is to take two sides of the dining room and add the numbers together. For instance, 11' wide x 15' long = 26" in diameter chandelier.

[There's a lot of great information in this post about chandeliers and sizing.](#)

But, for more detailed info about this and [333 other things](#), [please check out my 200+ page rules & tips guide.](#)

**My rule of thumb is if in doubt, scale down with lighting fixtures.**

Also, please be careful with table lamps. They keep getting bigger and **BIGGER AND BIGGER!!!**

I now see table lamps that are as much as 34" tall with a 20" wide shade. There are rare exceptions. I have a friend with a very cool classic-contemporary living room, and she has low side tables with tall retro lamps that are sensational.

But, if you have an average height end table, that is, say 26"-27" high, and then you add a lamp that is 34," it is probably going to look almost comical. Please be careful.



Above is a beautiful, traditional dining room that demonstrates my point where everything is just right, by [James Michael Howard](#).

This is a perfectly executed dining room. The chandelier is in perfect proportion to the room and table and hung at the ideal height. The furniture is not a matched set but looks great together as the lines and colors are complementary.

**#11 is one of the worst interior design mistakes**

**It is the single flush-mount ceiling fixture. AKA:**

**BOOB LIGHT**

[This post explains in better detail why it's so bad and what to do instead.](#)

Hallways and small entrances, closets and smallish bathrooms are the exception. The reason this type of lighting is so bad in larger rooms is that it's generally quite harsh and creates too many shadows. In smaller spaces, the light is able to bounce off the walls, eliminating this problem.

**Lighting is everything.**

That's how important it is, and if careful consideration is not given, your room is going to be a horrid place to be in, at night, no matter HOW beautifully decorated.

[For more about lighting, please click to read this post as well.](#)

## **Interior design mistake #12**

**Your art and mirrors are too small or too big. Or, hung too high or too low.**

[One thing I think it's better to go a little over-scale than under-scale with your wall mirrors.](#)

And art too, for that matter. Dinky mirrors and art are not chic, unless part of a grouping.

[I love Tory Burch's gorgeous painting here and the rest too.](#)

On the subject of hanging art. There is a tendency for many people to hang it too high, and the center should be at approximately eye height. Of course, there are exceptions.

## **Interior design mistake #13**

**You are choosing fabrics, or carpeting, etc., in the store only.**

You need to look at these items in your home, in your lighting, or you might get into serious trouble.

I had a friend years ago who sheepishly told me that her new pink carpeting looked beige in the store. She did not bring a sample home, first. Lesson learned.

Speaking of carpeting.

**Wall-to-wall carpeting is usually a mistake with the following exceptions.**

Except for a very small room, den, or a bedroom, unless it's something like seagrass or a cool leopard print is going to bring your room down a few notches. Now, I realize that a lot of you have wall-to-wall broadloom.

Oh, make no mistake. I had it too! For five painful years. And it was the happiest day of my life when they ripped that pink sucker up!



However, if you like it, then fine. If you're doing it because you want to save money, I'd try to figure something else out. If you think it hides the dirt, no. The dirt is still there, multiplied by 10.

I would rather see a cool, sealed concrete floor than a cheese-y wall-to-wall broadloom.

## **Interior design mistake #14**

### **Your area rug looks like a postage stamp.**

Most living rooms need at least an 8 x 10 rug. If you are layering, you can sometimes get away with a smaller rug. [Here's one of my favorite ways to layer rugs.](#) And make a smaller rug work.

## **Mistake #15**

### **I Need To Figure Out the Room's Theme and Then Just Run With It.**

When I was having my second child, a good friend asked me what was the "theme" of the baby's room? She was horrified to

hear that I had no "theme." You don't have to have one either. And if you do, please keep it subtle. (very subtle)



Anchors Away!!! lol (but that coffee table! omg!)

**Interior design mistake #16**

**A ceiling fan with three search lights.**



The problem is *not* the fan. I love fans. And I know that my southern readers would rather stick their heads in an oven than live without their fans.

The biggest problem here is the three hideous lights glaring down over our head. A single light isn't much better, but if it is absolutely necessary, then okay.

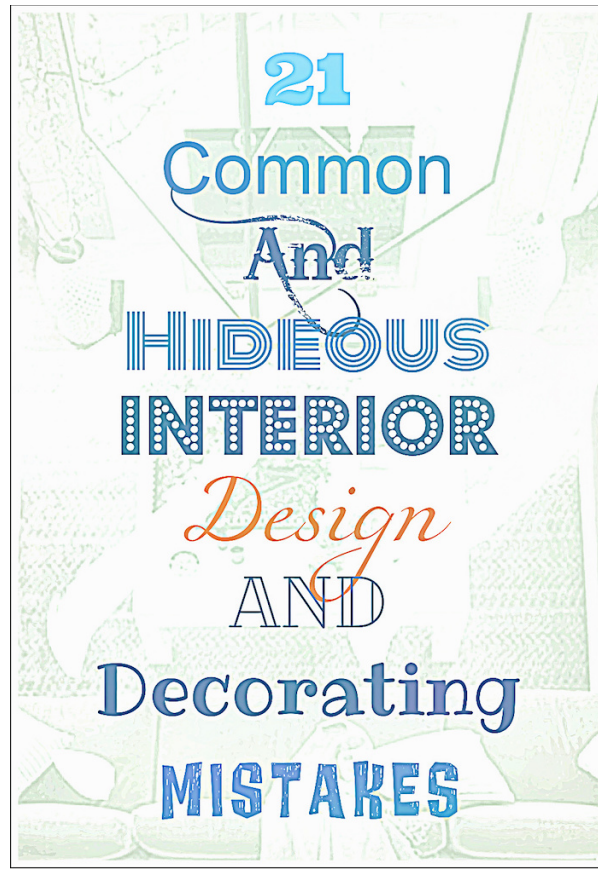
This type of ceiling fan gives off THE worst light. And, except for a kitchen, and small spaces like powder rooms and hallways, you don't need a ceiling lights at all.

And, even in the kitchen, you can have lamps and sconces to augment any ceiling fixtures. [More about kitchen lighting here.](#) And here is [another good post about kitchen light fixtures.](#)

**Generally, if the ceiling is light or pale, I prefer a white fan.**

The exception is [this beautiful apartment that has a vintage fan.](#) Fabulous!

[And here is a post all about fans that I love!](#)



Please pin to Pinterest for Reference

## **Interior decorating mistake #17**

Speaking of ceilings. The belief that the ceiling ALWAYS has to be white is a mistake.

It's not the biggest mistake one can make, but you might be losing out on something special. And, painting your ceiling a deeper color *will* make it look higher. [Dark colors recede, as we saw in this post.](#)

Remember the fabulous shimmering ceiling in this post?





### [Atlanta Homes and Lifestyles](#)

And one of my favorite posts that has [lots of ideas for ceilings](#).  
Actually, wait. [There's this post too!](#)

Oh, geezzz. [This one too.](#)

### **Interior decorating Mistake #18**

**The old accent wall, just because painting this [grotesque] color on all four walls would seriously be overwhelming.**



If you feel that way about a paint color, don't use it. Actually, the contrast makes, the one intensely painted wall look even **MORE** intense!

In addition, in this case, it looks like someone either ran out of paint or forgot to paint the other three walls.

**However, there *are* times when an accent wall is wonderful.**

- When it makes [architectural sense](#).
- A dark wall behind a TV to "hide" it. [For more about ways to conceal or hide the TV, click here.](#)
- Behind a bed in a boring boxy bedroom.



One of my favorite accent walls that enhances this bedroom so beautifully is this lovely one by Rye, NY interior designer [Laura Tutun](#).



[Décoration Paris appartement haussmannien-Marion Alberge](#)

This accent wall makes good architectural sense in this lovely home.



## **Interior design mistake #19**

### **Some Make The Egregious Decorating Mistake of Getting Wimpy With Paint Colors.**

This is why I wrote my [paint guides and created the palettes](#).

Oh, that reminds me. One of the sweetest readers, a woman named Pinkie, who always comments on my posts on Facebook, posted a little vignette using Dolphin's Cove. [One of the Laurel Home 144 paint colors](#).

Hang on...





**Benjamin Moore** *Dolphin's Cove 722*



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How pretty is that!

[Here's another post that has a lot of my favorite colors](#), and you can see how great they look in the photos, as well.

But, the aforementioned wimpy, AKA playing it safe is not knowing how to work with colors. It's being afraid of deeper, more saturated paint colors.

One of my favorite examples is:

**The ol' Crest Toothpaste living room.**

Or sometimes called ["hospital green."](#)

Please check out this post about [beautiful muted green and blue color schemes.](#) And, you'll find out some of my favorites.



**In fact, there is a whole boatload of problems in this sad room.**

- The rug is way too small
- insufficient, and horrible lighting
- a ceiling fan with a light. Just no...

I could go on with this one, but we'll let it be.



And then there's fabulous [Lee Ann Thornton](#) who can take a pale - minty - crest-y - hospital-y green, and it looks totally fabulous.

What's the difference?

**Well, for one thing, she didn't make one of the interior design mistakes that people often forget.**

**Interior design mistake #20. Forgetting about the architecture.**

[The architecture of the room is a critical element as we've talked about many times.](#)

Plus, in Leann's room:

- The furniture is beautiful and light, and the tone on tone nature is soothing.
- And, the room is punctuated with some handsome dark accents, including the floor which grounds the space.

**Interior decorating mistake #21 might work out okay, but it might not.**

**That is thinking you need to pick your paint colors first, before you know what the furniture is going to be.**

Until you have a solid direction and know what the other furnishings are going to be; or, at least the big pieces, you might **paint yourself into...! :]**

Although, working with a wall color that ends up not being a good choice can be a real headache.

If you are moving and the previous owners' colors make you want to hurl, that is different. But, I would still recommend working on as much of a plan as you can before [selecting your wall colors](#).

**Phew! That was a lot!**





Please pin me

I hope you enjoyed this report and learned at least one new thing. And, hopefully, I didn't kill you with all of these interior design mistakes. If I did, my sincere apologies. ;]

There is SO much to creating a beautiful room; it's a lot to digest, I realize. Perhaps bookmark this page about these common interior design mistakes for future reference.

One other terrific post is this [quick start interior design guide](#).

\*\*\*For a far more comprehensive guide; (much of the information is not anywhere on this blog.), please also consider purchasing [333 Hard to Find Decorating Rules & Tips You Need to Know Guide](#).

That link will take you to a page that tells you much more about this guide, if interested. There is a ton of useful information in that one, and all of [my interior design guides](#).

xo,

*Laurel*

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