



# 30 for ideas a livable living room

**1** Every living space needs a table-height surface for homework and projects. If space is tight, tuck a console table behind the sofa or against a wall.

AIMEE BEATTY, stylist

**2** Don't mount your TV too high. Here's an easy rule: The bottom should be at eye level when you're sitting, the top at eye level when you're standing.

DANNY LIPFORD, home expert

**3** If your sofa or sectional dominates the room, paint walls a shade lighter than the upholstery. The eye will skate across the room, not get stuck on the sofa.

LIZ LEVIN, designer

PHOTO: MARTY BALDWIN

by BERIT THORKELSON



**4** In a hardworking room like a living room, everything has to earn its keep. These accessories offer service with style: **A globe** for on-the-fly geography lessons for curious kids; **an hourglass** for timing video game sessions; **attractive tissue box covers** to make these necessities a little more visually pleasing.

**5** One of my favorite tricks is to prime one wall with multiple coats of Rust-Oleum's magnetic primer (\$22 per quart), then paint over it with whatever color you like. It turns the wall into a message center or gallery for kids' artwork without the visual clutter and multiple nail holes of a bunch of corkboards.

PATRICE BEVANS, designer

**6** Position diffuse, low-watt lighting, such as sconces with frosted glass shades or table lamps on dimmers, behind and slightly to the side of your TV. Your eyes will experience less strain as the picture shifts from light to dark.

SUZANNE KANTRA, [techlicious.com](http://techlicious.com)

**7** To discourage clutter, make this rule: If you carry it in, you carry it out. Items left out at the end of the night go into the "penalty box." To retrieve them, you have to pay the penalty, such as doing a dreaded household chore.

DONNA SMALLIN, author of *A to Z Storage Solutions*

**8** Arrange your furniture for conversation. Put pieces at cozy right angles close enough so people can talk, not just blow kisses across the room.

ELAINE GRIFFIN, designer

**9** Try out dozens of furniture layouts before you move the sofa. Visit [BHG.com/arrangeroom](http://BHG.com/arrangeroom) to get started.

**9** Display coffee table accessories on a tray so it's easy to remove them all at once when you're ready to play a game or have a pizza.

MITCHELL GOLD and BOB WILLIAMS, furniture experts

**10** If you no longer own a VCR, get rid of those VHS tapes. Donate or dispose of them ([greendisk.com](http://greendisk.com) will take 20 pounds of your "technotrash" for \$7 plus shipping). Replace favorite titles on DVD.

LORIE MARRERO, [clutterdiet.com](http://clutterdiet.com)



**12** Look at lamps as a way to add color and sculpture to the room without the clutter of too many knick-knacks. Three-way bulbs are a must. The low setting emits a soft glow; turn up the juice when you're ready to read.

from Facebook fans

**11** Once a month, do dinner and a movie night around the coffee table. Match the food to the flick. Try these fun pairings:

*Sweet Home Alabama* with ribs, corn on the cob, sweet tea, and peach cobbler for dessert would do the trick perfectly.

LINDSEY FORKEY

I'd fix an Italian feast and watch *Under the Tuscan Sun*. We'd have pasta, salad with farmer's market veggies, artisan cheese, and olive bread.

PATRICIA FABER ERWIN

Watch *Mystic Pizza* and have personal-size pizzas each person can top the way they like.

HOLLI LOWE STURGILL

Start with boeuf bourguignon for *Julie & Julia*, then serve chocolate torte with *Chocolat*.

DANIELLE ORGAN



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**13** Floor cushions add extra seating—perfect for kids—without introducing more furniture than your room can handle.

EDDIE MAESTRI, architect and designer  
*Round pintuck floor pillow, \$42, urbanoutfitters.com*

**14** The size of TV your room can accommodate depends on how far you sit from it. The distance between you and the screen should be equal to two or three times the diagonal screen size. If you're between two screen sizes, go with the larger one.

**15** My secret weapon is a round coffee table with a shelf below. The rounded edges are safer for little noggins.

LIZ LEVIN, designer



**16** To fit a reading corner into a small space, choose a tight-back chair rather than one with a separate back cushion. It's shallower but still comfy, especially when you add throw pillows.

**17** Stash a lap desk next to or under your favorite chair. Add a pouch containing pens, sticky notes, scissors, and a small stapler and you'll have a well-outfitted, portable workstation.

*Lap desk, \$20, bedbathandbeyond.com*

PHOTOS: (ROOM) MICHAEL PARTENIO; (OTHERS) MARTY BALDWIN



**18** Ditch the love seat. It's just 60 inches, so the only time you get two people to sit on one is if they're truly lovers. Instead, go with the 72-inch apartment-size sofa. The extra foot makes all the difference, and you can still pair it with a regular-size sofa.

ELAINE GRIFFIN, designer

**19** Keep a handheld vacuum plugged in and ready for popcorn and pet hair cleanups.

Try these expert tech picks to make your living room more fun and functional:



**20** **BLU-RAY PLAYER WITH BUILT-IN WI-FI**  
Tap into Netflix, Pandora, and other Internet services directly from your TV screen.

*Samsung BD-C6500, \$250, samsung.com*

**21** **WEB-ENABLED DIGITAL PICTURE FRAME**  
This frame receives and displays photos sent from e-mail, mobile devices, or Facebook. No need to load a data stick.

*Kodak PULSE digital frame, \$130, kodak.com*

**22** **REMOTE CONTROL EXTENDER**  
Control electronics from 100 feet away, even through walls and doors, so you can hide all those black boxes out of sight.

*Next Generation remote control extender, about \$50, amazon.com*

SUZANNE KANTRA,  
*techlicious.com*

**23** Make the floor extra cushy for lounging by throwing a layer of carpet padding under your area rug.

Buy it at any home improvement or carpet store. You can pad a 6x9 rug for about \$30.

EDDIE MAESTRI, architect and designer

**24** Keep a bowl full of Scrabble tiles or dominoes on the coffee table to encourage “unplugged” family time.

LISA ROBISON, designer

**25** Stash remotes (plus coasters, napkins, lip balm, and other necessities) in an attractive box with a lid. Bonus: You’ll always know where the remote is.



**26** If you have a desk or workspace in the room, go for the prettiest office accessories you can find, and use a dining chair as a stylish, streamlined seat.

**27** Choosing furniture upholstered in outdoor fabrics, Ultrasuede, synthetic blends, or fabrics treated with high-tech stain-resistance, such as Nanotex, adds longevity to your room, whether your life includes kids, pets, or clumsy guests.

LIZ LEVIN, designer

**28** Want a collected-over-time look, right now? You can’t go wrong if you mix a slipcovered sofa, a dark wood coffee table, and a leather chair. Pick distressed wood and leather so you won’t

have to worry as much about putting the first scratch on them.

MITCHELL GOLD and BOB WILLIAMS, furniture experts

**29** Get that expensive pillow squish from any bargain pillow cover when you swap the foam for a down insert. (You can find them for as little as \$6 for a 12-inch square.)

MICHAEL WALTERS, stylist

**30** Use cork trivets as oversize coasters that hold a drink and a snack. “File” them in a letter sorter or toast rack. 🍷

