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# LITTLE YELLOW ROOM PLANNER

## 5 STEPS TO A PERFECT ROOM DESIGN

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# Yes, you can design a room!



Do you struggle to put together functional spaces, pick the right style, or design a room?

If you do, this workbook might be for you!

This book is intended to guide you through the planning phases for any interior design project, even if you have absolutely no experience and have struggled in the past to make things work.

Implementing the five steps in this work book will build a strong foundation for any room design, big or small.

But let me tell you upfront, I am not a designer. I'm just like you. I wanted to create a beautiful home and I had no idea where to start or how to make things work. It took 20 years of trial and error to finally figure it all out.

So I am sharing the five step process that I use every single time I renovate a room. This process has helped me tap into my style and learn how to create beautiful rooms and functional spaces without any design background, and it can do the same for you!

# STEP ONE

# FUNCTIONALITY

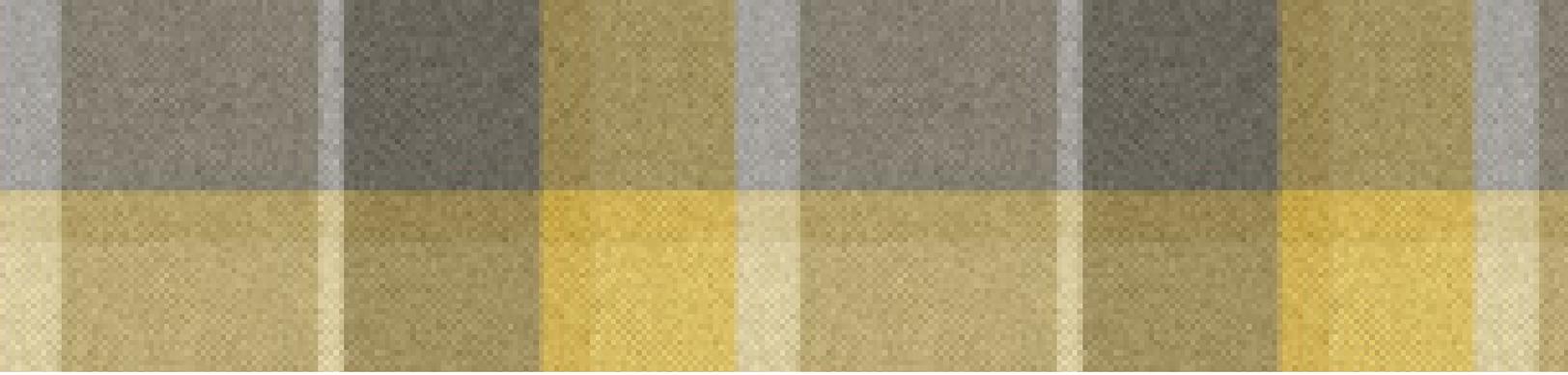
*Start with the end in mind!*

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THINGS TO DO

Complete Worksheet #1

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# FUNCTIONALITY

We often design a room based on what we want it to look like, only to be disappointed with the end result. In the end the room just does not function well.

The first thing you need to consider when you're designing a room is functionality. How are you going to use the room on a day to day basis?

A good room design plan starts with deciding how you want the room to work. Once you understand your room functionality you can plan around those primary needs through out the rest of the project.

For example, when redesigning a home office, you may want to consider things like work flow, desk space, lighting and noise.

You may also want the area to be clutter free, so storage might be key to your plans. Or you may need to share that space in another room like a living room, or spare guest bedroom.

In the end how is it all going to function?

The following page asks questions to get you thinking about the end results. Take some time to think about the answers and then jot them down.

*Beautiful design starts with understanding room functionality.*

# Worksheet #1

If you want a final product that works for you and your family this is the best place to start. Figuring out exactly what functionality you want from your new room will help direct the rest of the design process. So mull it over and jot your thoughts down here.

What will be the primary use for this room? (Home office, organized mudroom, cozy family room)

How does this room need to function to be a benefit to you? (Desk space for the office, storage space for the mudroom, more seating for the family room)

What functions of the room currently work - and what needs to change?

# Tips you may find helpful

## FUNCTIONALITY

- It is very helpful to draw out your room to scale. This helps to visualize where things will fit (or not fit).
- If you are unsure about the right placement for something, try searching on Google. There are countless resources on the internet that provide basic design placement advice, like how high to hang a mirror, or how much space should be between furniture.
- Remember it's also fine to break the rules. If you live a small space common advice may not apply to you. (It rarely applies to me)
- Give consideration to walkways and doors and be sure that the flow of traffic works well in your design.
- You should consider double duty furniture if storage is an issue. Coffee tables that open, cabinets for TV stands, storage benches for mudrooms to hide the clutter.
- Any design hiccup you may encounter can be solved with a bit of research. Everything we learned during our home renovation came from tips and tutorials we found online.
- Give consideration to how other members in your family want to use the room. It's a good idea to get feedback from family members before you start so everyone has a buy-in to the final result.
- If you're stuck on this exercise think about the pain points you have now in your current design. Work forward from those issues - how could you fix them in your new design?
- Renovating without any thought about upgrading or improving functionality is a waste of money. You always want to leave something better than you found it.

# STEP TWO

## CHOOSE A DESIGN STYLE

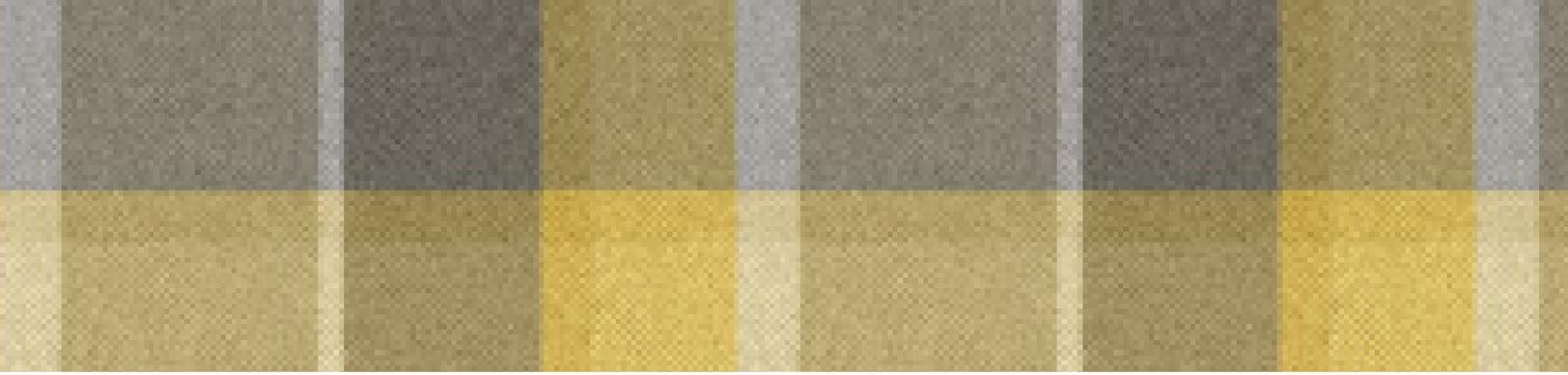
*You don't have to be trendy!*



### THINGS TO DO

Build a Pinterest board  
Complete Worksheet #2





# CHOOSE A DESIGN STYLE

Choosing a design style is integral to creating a cohesive space.

One of the primary reasons a room feels off is because the furniture, design styles and colours clash with one another and create too much noise for the eyes.

A bright pink modern chair does not always work in a quaint farmhouse style kitchen.

Most of this disconnect can be solved by finding and understanding the primary design principles around your style.

Now this doesn't mean you pick one style and stick to it. I have a rustic farmhouse feel to my home, but there are industrial elements, and in some places cottage elements, but they all work together.

You can mix and match styles but try to keep it cohesive.

The following workbook sections will help you decide on a style and help set your plan in place.

There's a lot to think about in this section, so tuck some time away to work through it. Making these decisions now will help shape your design plan throughout the rest of the project.

*Choose your design style based on what you like and want, but keep in mind that it does need to work in your current home.*

# PINTEREST

The best way to find your signature home style is to see it visually.

Pinterest is one of the best ways to do this and it can answer many of the design questions you may have.

My suggestion is to set up a Pinterest board, specifically for your “room”.

Spend a few days searching Pinterest using keywords related to your project. Look for words like kitchen makeover, living room makeover etc. Save every picture that catches your eye.

After a few days go back to the board you created and see what connects everything together. Once you understand what it is you like you can refine your search further.

If you're unsure what your design style is you can check some of the keywords on the pin and see if anything stands out, like craft-man style, mid century modern, rustic farmhouse etc.

Once you know your style, continue to refine your search by searching specifically for your style. Rustic farmhouse living room, or coastal cottage bedroom will pull up specific searches related to your project.



# Worksheet #2

Here are a few questions to help you get more specific. Use these if you're still having a hard time finding your style.

What were the design styles that came up most frequently?

We're there any textures that stood out? (Marble, wood, velvet, burlap, satin)

We're there any specific furniture designs that stood out?

What were the dominant colours on your design board?

Did you find any inspiration, or ideas you would like to include in your design plan?

# CHOOSING A COLOUR PALETTE

*Take the time to find the perfect colour palette!*

There are lots of places you can turn to find colour inspiration.

Your Pinterest design board will likely have a colour theme you can adopt. You can also take a look at your clothes, your favourite colours, or look for your favorite designers online and see if anything grabs your attention. It may take a bit of research but eventually something will click for you.

The best way to pick a colour palette is to decide on a primary fabric that will work with your overall style. The fabric could have multiple colours or could be a solid colour like white.

Once you choose your fabric you can use it to decide on additional colours for your room. If you chose a solid fabric, find 2 additional colours that coordinate with your fabric, keeping in mind the tone, style, and light of the room.

Also, keep in mind, the colours that you choose will be repeated multiple times in your room. That bright indigo might look great in that fabric swatch, or compliment your primary colour, but it might be too much when it is spread around the room.

Follow the 60-30-10 rule. Your primary colour should make up 60% of the total colour in your room, your contrast, or complimentary colour should be 30% and your third colour would make up 10%. Usually this 10% is made up from your brightest colour, but if you've gone moody and dark, having a 10% pop of white can be quite elegant.

If you want to know if a colour will work within your palette, there are colour palette builders online you can test for free.

Don't be afraid to experiment. The lightest colours do not have to go on the walls, and textures like dark woods, can absolutely be part of your colour plan.

If you are still having trouble picking colours, or deciding on a room palette, go to the colour wheel. Picking contrasting colours, or complimentary colours can be a way to create a palette when you are uncomfortable with colour choice.

# Tips you may find helpful

## CHOOSING A DESIGN STYLE & COLOUR PALLET

- Research, research, research. If you know the direction you want to go (modern farmhouse, boho eclectic, French gothic) do a bit of research to get a better understanding of your design style so you are equipped with the right information before you start to make purchases.
- ALWAYS test paint swatches. A North facing room will cast a cool tone on your paint, the same way a South facing window will cast a warm tone. The same paint colour can look completely different in another room, so always test your paint choices.
- Create a physical colour palette and carry it with you when you go shopping. I cannot tell you how many times I picked up a cushion, or a piece of room decor thinking it would work, only to bring it home and have it be completely off.
- You must keep in mind that any design style you pick needs to work with your current home, unless you plan on changing everything. Small changes in a single room work perfectly fine, but if you add a rustic style living room to your modern home it is going to feel very out of place.
- When you are equipped with your final design plan and colour palette do not be tempted to buy something that does not fit unless you are sure you can make it work. I bought an ornate light fixture for over my island because it was a deal that I could not pass up. I've since replaced it because it stuck out like a sore thumb and did not at all work with my rustic farmhouse style. Lesson learned.
- Take into consideration the "feel" you want to have for your room. If you want it light and airy, bright and cheerful, you probably don't want to buy that black rug no matter the sale or how much you love it.

# STEP THREE

## COMPLETE A ROOM AUDIT

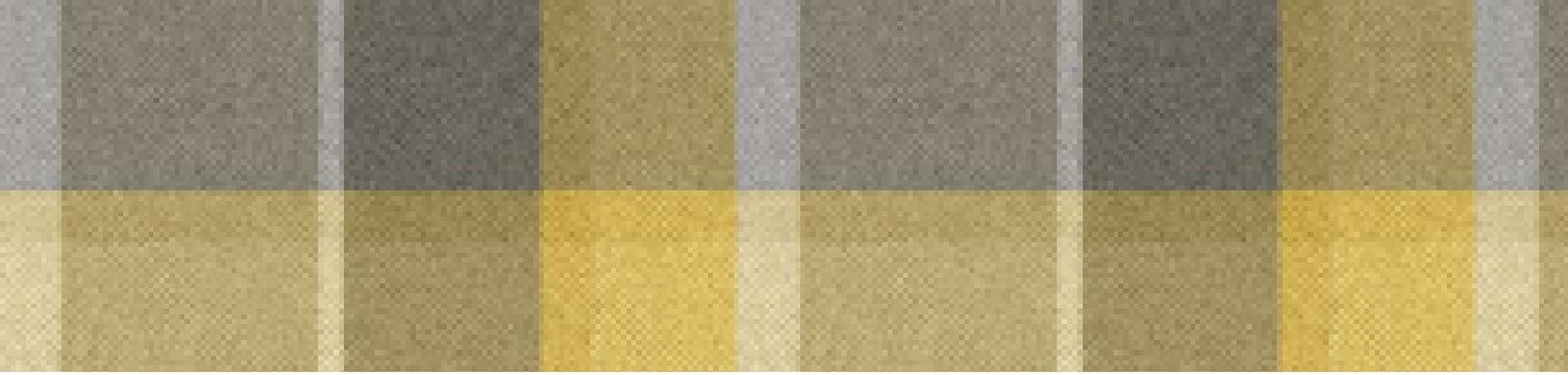
*See what you have and what you need!*

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### THINGS TO DO

Complete Worksheet #3  
Complete the Needs List  
Complete the Wants List

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# YOUR ROOM AUDIT

A room audit isn't complicated or difficult, it just takes a bit of time to complete.

Grab a notebook and pen and walk around your current room and start making some big picture decisions on what items can stay, what items will go, and what items you are unsure about.

For example, let's say you want to make over your bedroom, a room audit would include all furniture, bedding, rugs, wall colour, textures, lighting, ceiling, floors, curtains, blinds, throw cushions - etc.

If your functionality goals are to create a bedroom with much more storage, maybe the end tables need to be replaced with larger nightstands with drawers, or the plan may need to include a new wardrobe.

If the bedroom design is modern farmhouse, that boho headboard likely won't work, but can it be changed or updated?

You may look at your bedroom furniture and like the design, but know the colour will never work in your plan. Can you refinish, or paint the furniture to match the style you want, or will it need to be replaced entirely?

Your budget will be the biggest deciding factor to what stays and what goes, but having a detailed list to refer back to allows you move those "maybe" items around. The "maybe" list is the place you're likely going to squeeze more out of your final budget.

Keeping the furniture, in this example, would free up budget-money so you can update the floors, paint, and bedding. That seems like a decent compromise.

*Don't forget to check other rooms in your house! You may find a bevy of items perfect for your makeover project.*

# Worksheet #3

Room audits are very helpful when you start to build out your budget. Knowing in advance what your style and functionality are will assist in making decisions on what can stay and what can go. It's an important step if you are struggling to make your budget work.

What items in this room do not work toward your functionality goals?

What items in your room do not work in your upcoming design theme?

Are there any items from the previous two questions that can be upgraded, reused, or made over to fit your design theme?

# NEEDS LIST

After you have completed your room audit it's time to take a look at the items required to complete your room design. This step will assist you later on when you are trying to balance your budget.

Building Supplies (paint, wood, trim, stain, paint brushes, etc)

Big Changes (walls, floors, structure, electrical, plumbing)

Furniture

Final Touches (decorative items, pillows, rugs, throw blankets, wall decor, clocks, lamps, candles etc)



# The Want List

**MUST HAVES**

In this area write down your wants and wishes for your new room.

**DECOR ITEMS**

**DESIGN ELEMENTS**

**THE SPLURGE**

# Tips you may find helpful

## ROOM AUDIT

- You may find extra money in your budget simply by painting a current piece of furniture, or finding furniture you have in other rooms that could work in your new space.
- A room audit lets you see exactly what you have; you may think twice about replacing that sofa for \$2,000 if you can buy a good cover for \$500 and spend that \$1500 on one of your big splurge items.
- A room audit also lets you see your current space with a different set of eyes. When you look at a piece, you're now thinking "Does this fit with my master plan?" or "Could I make this work with the style I want?"
- It's a good idea to go through your room audit with a notebook and list out everything you have and mark it: stay, go, or maybe. You can refer back to the list when you start the budgeting process.
- Understand that your Needs List is primary, regardless if it isn't the pretty stuff. Your Needs list ensures that your room design will be functional & beautiful.
- \_ Remember that your Wants List is the extras you would like to have in your room renovation. Things that are bit out of reach now, or do not fit into the budget. For example your new dining room budget may not include money right now for a new set of chairs, but you do want them. Once your budget is completed and you find that you are under your firm number, it's time to start adding in some of those "want items."
- This process is all about compromise. I sometimes go back through my budget and Needs List to squeeze money out for my "wants." If you get creative, you would be surprised how much you can stretch a budget.

# STEP FOUR

## CREATE YOUR BUDGET

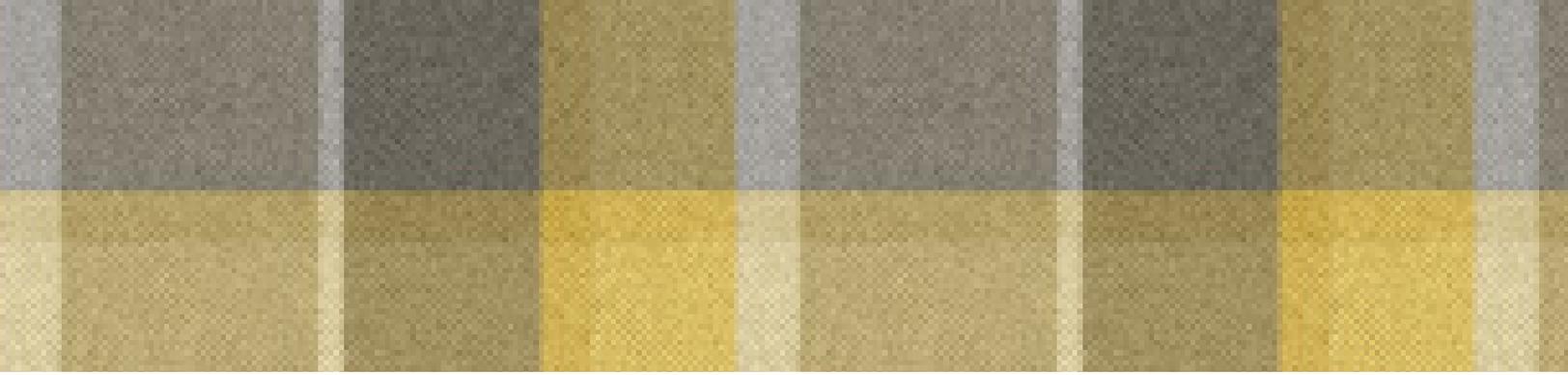
*and try to stick to it*



### THINGS TO DO

Complete Budget Worksheet





# CREATE YOUR BUDGET

You probably have a hard number in mind for your budget. Stick to it, and try work with it as best you can.

Regardless of whether you're tearing out a room and starting from scratch, or if you're simply out to spruce up a space, I highly recommend working through your budget.

It took me halfway through a full home DIY renovation to realize that I was a bad budgeter. I based most of my budgets on the best case scenarios and never thought about the details, or the snags.

You're never going to budget perfectly, because you never know what is going to happen during a makeover or renovation, but planning will help you come close.

Take your sheet in hand and walk through your room listing out all the supplies, furniture and decor items you are going to need to complete your project.

The small building supply items add up, so don't leave them out. Try to include all the bits and bobs as you go through.

If you are unsure of a price my recommendation is to do some online research to find a rough estimate of cost.

I work through my budget template for every project now, and it's helped me stay on track.

*You do not need to spend a fortune on a beautiful home!*





# Tips you may find helpful

## 9 TIPS THAT COULD HELP YOU SAVE ON YOUR ROOM MAKEOVER

- #1. Invest in good paint. Good paint lasts longer, can be touched up later without showing and looks better. Sherwin Williams often has 40% off coupons. Sign up for their email notifications to receive updates on sale programs.
- #2. You can save a considerable amount of money on trim if you go with a simple design like craftsman style. The trick is to cut your trim out of full MDF sheets. I save more than 75% on all my trim for all my rooms by making my own trim. Some hardware stores will cut it for you in store, making it a very cost effective solution that works great.
- #3. DIY your own custom furniture, or price to see the difference if you have someone make it for you. We estimate we have saved over \$7,000 building our own furniture.
- #4. Make your own home decor items. You can save an incredible amount of money if you're a bit crafty. There are countless tutorials out there for beautiful home decor items.
- #5. Dull hardwood floors that you cannot refinish can be revived with Bona Hardware Restorer - I'm not kidding, it's crazy the difference this makes on a wood floor.
- #6. Garage sales, auctions, estate sales and thrift stores are excellent places to find vintage furniture and one off items that could be the focal point of your room. You can usually find something amazing on a dime.
- #7. The humble cotton drop cloth can be dyed, cut, and sewed in to a myriad of different projects. They have a linen look that makes beautiful curtains, throw pillows, or even duvets.
- #8. Find a plant you like and take clippings. In 6 months one plant could be 7 - filling your home with beautiful greenery.
- #9. Always verify your prices by checking a different source. I often find my items for a lower price by shopping around. It makes a big difference when you're trying to squeeze that budget.

# STEP FIVE

## YOUR DESIGN PLAN

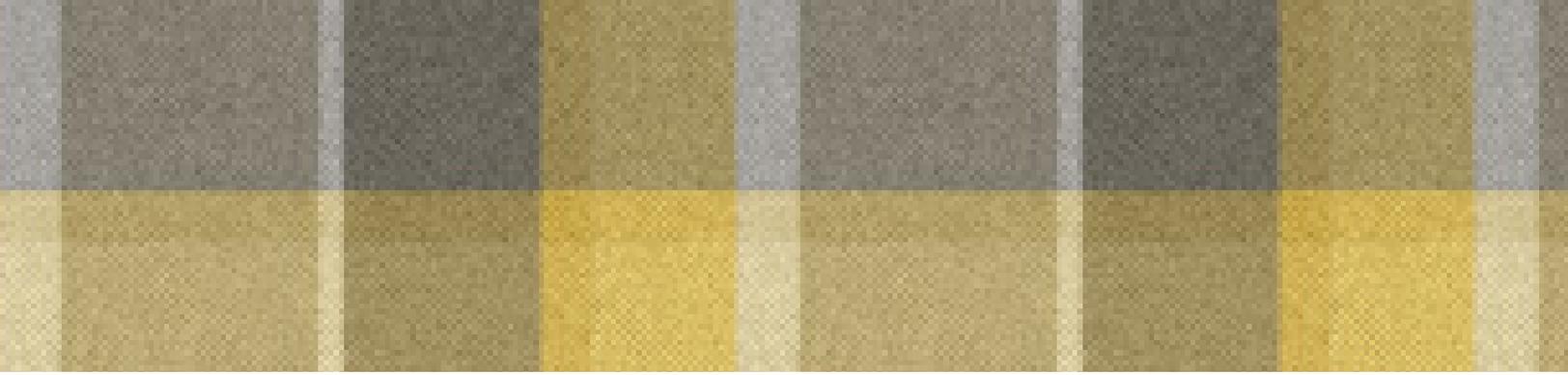
*and try to stick to it!*



### THINGS TO DO

Complete Worksheet Design Style  
Complete Worksheet Functionality  
Complete Final Budget





# YOUR DESIGN PLAN

Ok, now you're at the end. You've created your design plan, picked your colour palette, thought about the details and built your budget.

You've also made some hard decisions on what had to go from the budget, or what could stay.

Now it's time to pull it all together, and create the plan for your room.

I would suggest writing it all out and keeping a copy handy for shopping or thrifting to refer back to.

It's a good idea to ask each time you purchase something - does this fit my plan. Does this particular item add to the functionality that I want, and does it fit the feel and style I want.

Remember, check the budget. If you budgeted \$300 for lighting, it's probably not a good decision to buy that \$700 light fixture. You may have to sacrifice something from your budget down the line.

*Keep your design plan handy to help you make the best choices for your new room!*

# Design Style

This is where you pull your entire design style together. Think about how you want the room to look in the end, from colours to furniture placement, texture and decor items. I also added a section to think about how you want the room to feel. (Cozy, bright, cheerful, dramatic, etc)

My design style for this project can be defined as:

I want my room to feel:

These are textures, colours and design elements that are important to my design plan:

# Functionality

In every step of the process we have kept functionality front of mind. This is the opportunity to go back and ensure that your plan still includes the primary functionality you wanted for your room when you started.

My primary use for this room is:

My plan includes the following to ensure that my functionality needs are met:

This is how I envision this room working when it is complete:

# Final Budget

This is the place to make the hard decisions before things go over budget. Remember : never pull from your Needs List, always pull from your Wants List first. Alternately, if you come under budget after some savvy choices, its OK to splurge on one of those wants!

My firm budget number:

If I go over my budget, these are the items that can be removed from the plan first:

If I go under budget these are the items that can be added in first from my Wants List:

# Yes, you designed a room!

I hope this little workbook was helpful. It may not answer all your questions but it should help you create a plan that gets you started.

Designing a room doesn't have to be painful. I believe planning and thinking through each step makes the projects easier.

When you plan out your design and think through every detail, you maintain control over the project.

When you can see all the pieces, it is much easier to assemble the puzzle or even move the pieces around.

I encourage you to squeeze those budgets for every cent and get your "wants" out of your project. I've made a life long adventure of doing just that with everything I do. I work my plan until it is perfect in my head and on paper and then I get to work making it happen. It's incredibly rewarding to see your plan come to life.

If you have any suggestions on how his guide could be better or if you have any questions feel free to reach out to me anytime.

Email - [hello@littleyellowwheelbarrow.com](mailto:hello@littleyellowwheelbarrow.com)

Thanks for stopping by!  
♥ LAURA





