

The Best Design Tips Ever

Six of our past Design Award finalists and winners share their best tips.

We encourage our clients to first focus on their entries and master bedrooms. The entry (both inside and outside) is your first chance to make an impression and establish the essence of the public spaces in your home. The master bedroom should be a personal, peaceful oasis that does not have to relate to the rest of your spaces.

— **Daniel Contelmo of Daniel Contelmo Architects, Poughkeepsie**

My favorite design-build tip is to remove a wall to create an open-concept space. It dramatically changes the look and function of a room and is relatively easy to accomplish, even if the wall is load-bearing.

— **Denise Wenacur of DW Design & Decor, Croton-on-Hudson**

Make positive changes to enhance your environment by collaborating with professionals who really understand you.

— **Randy O'Kane of Bilotta Kitchens, Mamaroneck**

What is your best design tip?

Simply put: Design from the inside out. Have your end use in mind along with its corresponding plan before you break ground or make any purchases. This could eliminate potential errors in building details and keep you focused on what is essential for the project at hand.

— **Leslie Gustafson of Leslie Gustafson & Co., Chappaqua**

I am a firm believer in mixing pattern and texture with fabrics and materials. Stripes, tweeds, checks, florals, and plaids are just a few of the patterns to consider. It's all right to mix patterns as long as you do three things: 1. Keep the background color the same. 2. Make sure all patterns share the same colors. 3. Vary the scale or size of the patterns.

— **Mara Solow of Mara Solow Interiors, Pleasantville**

In almost every project we do, we specify a console table with nested X-benches, to create an elegant and functional arrangement. Most living spaces have an extra wall or alcove that clients are unsure how to furnish. The console table provides a great opportunity to display beautiful books and accessories, serves as a place for guests to place their personal items, or even functions as a small buffet for serving food. Keeping two X-benches stored underneath the console fills the void but also provides flexible, stylish overflow seating for gatherings when the main seating won't suffice.

— **Claire Paquin of Clean Design Partners, Scarsdale**