

MANSION GLOBAL

DESIGNER'S CORNER

Perfect Pillows: Finding the Right Cushions to Accessorize Your Space

Think of them as your room's jewelry—adding pops of color and style

BY JENNIFER TZESES | ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON SEPTEMBER 4, 2019 | [MANSION GLOBAL](#)



Varying tones and patterns pick up and enhance the overall palette in a room designed by Louise Bradley.

RAY MAIN

Throw pillows are the ultimate accessory for a space. They add instant personality and can change the look of a room in a quick and easy way without having to completely redecorate. "Think of pillows on upholstery as you would jewelry to enhance a little black dress," said Phillip Thomas, founder and principal of Phillip Thomas Inc. in New York City. "Pillows transform a room and can take it from a summery vibe to a warmer, winter feel."

They also add a finishing touch to a space. "Without carefully selected accessories, a room can feel stark or unfinished," said London-based interior designer Louise Bradley. "Cushions add the final layer, creating a comfortable and inviting atmosphere. They can be understated or bold, grouped symmetrically or asymmetrically, bringing a room together without being overpowering," she said.

For advice on picking the perfect pillows for any space, follow these tips from the design pros.

Strike a Balance

"Both color and shape should be carefully considered depending on the style, silhouette, texture and hues of your furniture. Even a single pop of color used on a trim or piping of a cushion creates contrast to the surrounding pieces of furniture and/or accessories."

"Placing the largest cushion at the back and angled in the arm of the sofa can be a perfect starting layer for any sofa. Building from there and adding different sizes of cushions can complete the room. We usually use around five cushions of varying sizes on a sofa."

"Pillows don't need to match but usually we create a selection of cushions in varying sizes and fabrics that sit together to enhance the furniture and hard finishes within a room. We always use a variety of different textures and colors to complete the interior and draw the eye around the room. However, the hues and tones must be within a carefully selected color palette that unifies the room scheme as a whole."

"Depending on the ambiance you wish to create, there can be a series of different scales of pattern. A large, medium and small-scale print will produce an interesting and well-balanced cushion arrangement combined with solid colored fabrics. Too many patterns, however, can dominate an interior. Rather than opting for bold choices, using subtle layers is a perfect harmony between small detail and vibrant textures."

— London-based interior designer Louise Bradley

Mix and Match

"Fun throw pillows are the best way to add unexpected whimsy to your design scheme through playful patterns and colors. They can also help tie all the other elements of the room together."

"We always like to mix squares and rectangles together, with the largest size square pillows flanking the ends of the sofa, as well as corners if it's a sectional. A couple of the pillows should be multicolor and act as the link for your color story—and the remainder can be individual examples of one or two of the colors in your design scheme."

"We prefer the pillows not to match at all for a less decorated and more organic look. That being said, they should all be complementary and work together."

"Play with scale when selecting your patterns, some large, small and textural patterns that act as solids. As a rule, on a seven-foot sofa, you should have a minimum of three pillows and a maximum of five. If the sofa gets longer than that, you can add two more. And while it might seem counterintuitive, an odd number of pillows actually creates a better sense of balance and more interest than an even number."

— Christine Markatos Lowe of Christine Markatos Design in Santa Monica, Calif.



Bold patterned and textured pillows add personality to a room designed by Christine Markatos Lowe of Christine Markatos Design.

Photography by Manolo Langos, Courtesy of Christine Markatos Design

Get Creative

"Pillows offer an easy way to be creative, fun and experiment with a bold element that you might not otherwise incorporate. For example, this is a great way to introduce patterns and animal prints. Pillows also offer you the opportunity to include delicate fabrics that may not be as suited for everyday wear. Switching out decorative throw pillows is one of the best ways to seasonally update interiors."

"I treat pillows like works of art. I enjoy collaborating with custom embroidery workrooms to create one-of-a-kind designs."

"For more contemporary spaces, I like to use a cleaner knife-edged shaped pillow, which has a crispness to it that complements a pared-down interior. For more traditional interiors, I often go with a Turkish corner-shaped pillow; the volume gives a very inviting feel."

"A beautiful texture can have just as much impact as a great pattern. Light has a tremendous impact on texture. Textures change dramatically as light changes and moves through a space. "



Designer Phillip Thomas, founder and principal of Phillip Thomas Inc., used patterned pillows that reflect the style and tones in a living room.

Michael Mundy

— Phillip Thomas, founder and principal of Phillip Thomas Inc. in New York City

Go for Cohesion

"When considering the shape of your throw pillows, remember variety and practicality. Mixing and matching two sizes of square pillows or lumbar pillow plays with the levels on a sofa or chair by adding visual stimulation. Varying sizes of throw pillows can give a stiff modular sofa fluidity and movement.

"Throw pillows are designed to be interchangeable and versatile. It's important that they are their own distinct entity on a piece of furniture because they make a statement without taking a stance.

"Stick to a variation of a theme. It's important to stay in the same palette as the style of furniture or room. Something modern can have bold geometric patterns or color blocking. A room that's more traditional can have embellishments like fringe for added flair. Just keep it simple with no more than two different patterns at once."

—Alexandra D'Alessandro, president and interior designer, D'Alessandro Design Inc., based in New York