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Life

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BABIES' ROOMS GET GROWN-UP MAKEOVER

Trend in nurseries is for designs that will grow with the family and complement the rest of the house.

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Nursery design gets less cutesy, more chic

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So long, teddy bears and cartoon characters. Hello, sophisticated patterns and bold color choices. The times have changed for the décor of nurseries. Many parents no longer want a nursery that screams "Baby" in everything from curtains to furniture to bedding. More and more, they're opting for rooms with a style that can grow with the child and that doesn't clash with the aesthetic in the rest of the house.

"Cutesy is definitely out and so is gender-specific," said Renee Beerck of Centerville Design Associates. "Parents are planning rooms with a second child in mind."

It also helps to have a room that isn't tied to one motif. "Kids form opinions very, very early. It's good to keep your design flexible so you can change it more easily," said Jeanne Behm of Alacarte Designs in Dayton.

Colors

There are no rules when it comes to color for baby nurseries. Pastels are still popular but a lot of parents are making more bold choices. Rich purples are popular for girls' rooms and primary colors are popular for boys. Even a

traditional color like pink is getting updated by using raspberry and deep peony shades.

Debbie Basnett of Vintage Scout Interiors in Centerville has noticed a trend toward using a color not normally associated with babies: black. "People are using it now for more than just mobiles or toys. We're seeing black accent walls or black walls with white stripes," she said.

Beerck of Centerville Design Associates recently decorated a Dayton nursery with a black and white motif. "They did not want to know if they were having a boy or a girl," she said. The room features a wall with zebra wallpaper on it and a very cozy fuzzy carpet on the floor.

Another nursery she decorated was done in very neutral tones. The parents knew they were having a girl, but wanted the room to work for future children. To give the room a feminine feel, Beerck layered little rugs in pink and green. "Rugs are a great inexpensive way to add punches of color," she said.

Robin's egg blue and chocolate brown, paired together, is also popular, Behm said. "It's a good one to put together right now because that combination is easy to find in stores," she said. Mix and match solids with stripes and polka dots to create visual interest. If using these colors in a girl's

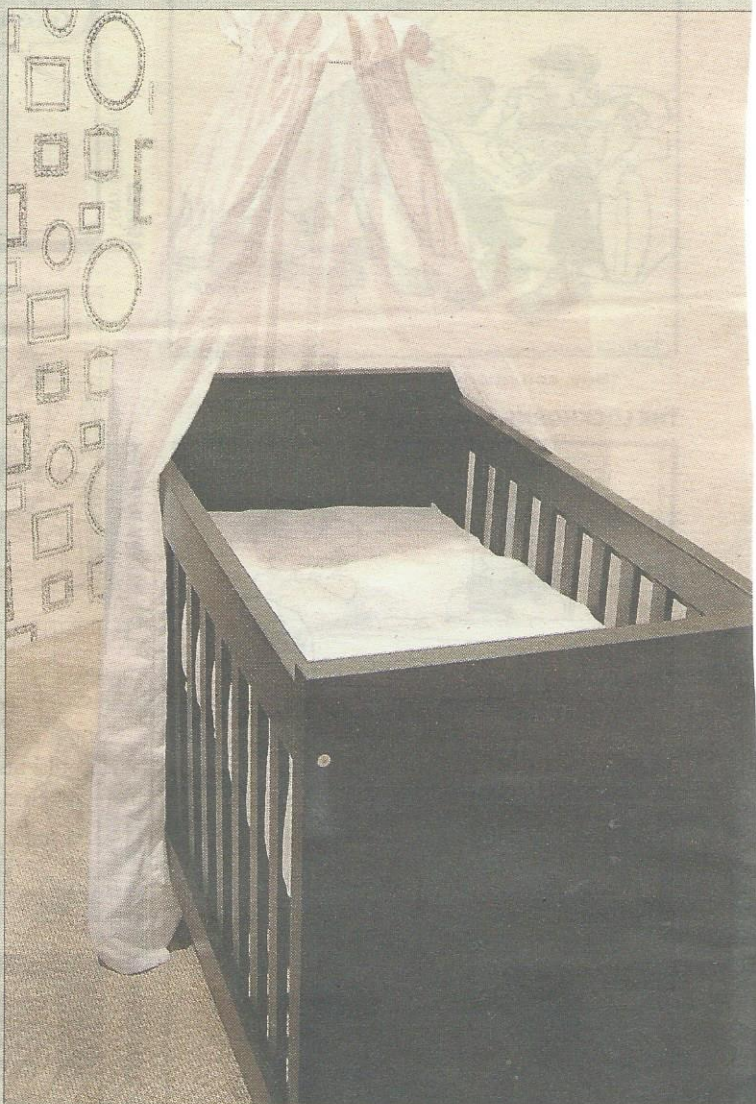
MORE PARENTS ARE CHOOSING MOTIFS WITH FLEXIBILITY, AND COLORS WITH A SECOND CHILD IN MIND

room, hang soft draperies in a sheer fabric, with a shade underneath to block light for naps and morning, and use dressier lamp shades. "Blue doesn't always have to be a boys color," Behm said.

For girls, Behm thinks pink and green is always a good choice. "It's a color pairing that can go on for infinity," she said. "You see it a lot now in bedding for adult rooms. Your teenage daughter may be just as happy with it as your preschooler."

Furnishings

It is possible to purchase furniture that can last from birth through college. Choose furniture made of wood, or faux-wood, and you'll be more likely to use it long-term than if you go with a more traditional white. Convertible cribs can be turned into a small toddler bed and then, using the back as a headboard, a full-size bed. Many changing tables can easily be used as just a chest of drawers by removing the pad



Black is a color not normally associated with babies that is gaining increasing favor for use in nursery design.

off the top.

However, designers were mixed on their view of convertible cribs. "I think they can be kind of expensive and I don't know anyone who has used them all the way through," Behm said. "I think the toddler beds can be awkward."

Nursery furniture styles tend to follow adult trends, Basnett said. "We're starting to see industrial elements in nurseries and more modern cribs. The furniture has real straight lines. It's almost the Ikea-type look," she said.

Although traditionally, parents rocked their babies to sleep while sitting on hard, wooden rocking chairs, glider chairs with ottomans are more the norm now. "If

mom or dad is exhausted, they need a comfortable place to sit, especially at 3 in the morning," Beerck said. Some gliders are even designed with slipcovers so they don't look like gliders, and could transition easily into a living room once they are no longer needed in the nursery.

Sometimes, a glider isn't enough. If the room is big enough, putting in a love seat or futon can be a great idea. It's another space to relax on and can provide a spot for the parent to crash if spending the night in the nursery.

Walls

Once upon a time, large wall murals were en vogue in baby

rooms.

"Now, people are going back to using wallpaper, but not borders. They'll do one wall, to give the room some punch," Beerck said.

If they do choose a pattern, such as the zebras in the black and white nursery Beerck designed, they're not going with a cutesy motif. "People are getting a little more sophisticated because it's a cost to have to replace and they want to be able to keep it until the child is in middle-school," she said.

Basnett has noticed the same trend. "Instead of wall murals, you're now seeing patterns and geometric shapes, like stripes and large dots," she said. "That tends to last longer than some of the more juvenile patterns we used to see."

Since it is a child's room, get wallpaper you can scrub clean. "Look at the back of the paper in the book and it will tell you. Washable paper isn't necessarily good enough. It should say scrubbable," Behm advised.

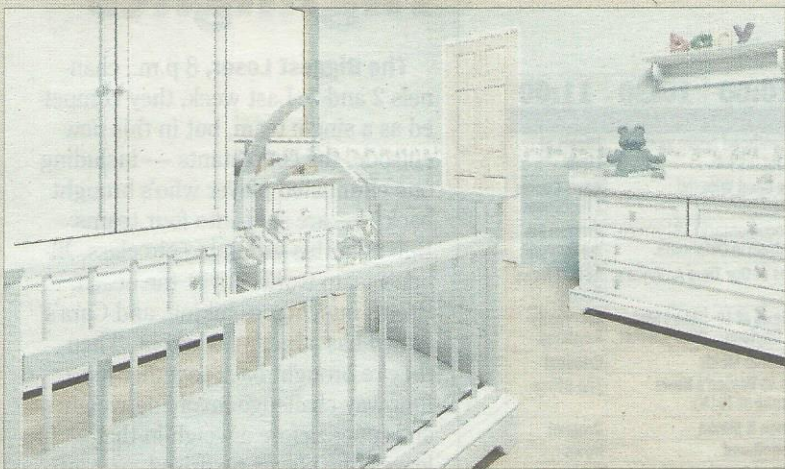
A great option that parents have now is purchasing removable peel and stick-on wall art. Numerous designs are available in just about any style you can imagine, ranging from cartoonish to elegant. Even something as simple as arranging big polka dots on the wall above the crib can really have a large impact. When you're tired of it, just take it down.

Behm likes the look of writing on walls. "You can hire a painter to write nursery rhymes or write your child's name in different languages. It looks great as a border along the ceiling or even written on the wall at random," she said.

Storage

Again, the trend is away from plastic or bright-colored containers that only a child could love.

"We sell several different shelving units in wood tones, which have nice-looking wicker baskets," Beerck said. Baskets can also be used under the crib as



Walls and furniture in neutral tones can be easily accented with different colored fabrics as future children of possibly different genders come along.

extra storage. "Make it more attractive by putting a fancy ribbon on it," Behm suggested.

A shelf that hangs high in the nursery could later be hung down low so the top part could be used as a desk top. Store a cube underneath it that can be pulled out for seating.

Art and accessories

Designers said less is more in nurseries. Behm advocated avoiding clutter. "You don't want to overdo it with accessories," she said. "You want the space to be a quiet, serene and peaceful environment for you and the child."

That includes the walls. "For nurseries, there's not a lot of wall art. It's usually a cleaner look," Beerck said.

For those that do choose to put items on the wall, she suggested framing family photographs. It's a great way to personalize a nursery. "I usually recommend black and white pictures," Beerck said. Basnett suggested using photographs of parents and grandparents when they were young.

Unifying the wall art around a theme is another option. Themes tend to be less commercial these days, as in, not Winnie the Pooh or Mickey Mouse. Instead, the trend is toward more general themes, such as nautical, sports, tea party or zoo motifs.

Using large letters to put your

child's name up on the wall has been popular for a while now. Use different fonts for each letter to jazz things up a bit, or make each letter a different color. Using your child's name as a decorative motif elsewhere in the room is also very trendy. Children's retailers like Pottery Barn Kids will stitch kid's names on everything from pillowcases to basket liners to slip covers for chairs.

Instead of filling the room with stuffed animals, a well-placed giant panda or giraffe — outside of the crib, for safety reasons — now suffices. Throw the beautiful soft blanket you received over the back of the rocking chair or display the quilt grandma made by hanging it on the wall, rather than leaving them in the crib where they put your infant at risk of suffocation.

When picking lamps, choose basic styles that would blend into any room in the house. It's simple to switch lampshades, using colors and patterns that match bedding or curtains. If your toddler later decides he must have a Buzz Lightyear room, switch out the lamps for a few years until his tastes change again.

For overhead lighting, Behm suggested having a bit of fun with it. "We're seeing people getting chandeliers," she said. "Show a little crystal with some bling, bling. Babies love the way they reflect light."