



KID'S SPACE

INSPIRING ROOMS FOR GROWING MINDS

story by Christian Lee
photography by Michael Nielsen



Living spaces, especially bedrooms, provide endless opportunity for vibrant expression. Children's rooms are no different, and with the beat of children's unfiltered opinions, creating a living space can be an exciting adventure. Kids make bold, independent choices that parents, when left to their own devices, might be reluctant to make. If grown-ups listen closely, however, kids will surprise and delight with refined and open-minded perspectives. A child's bedroom is an important expression of self.

Parents often vacillate between conflicting needs. On one hand, we want you, our kids, to stay young and innocent, oblivious to the world outside of the one we create for you. On the other hand, we want to provide you with the tools and skills necessary to become productive, healthy, contributing grown-ups capable of fielding whatever life throws your way. This tension seems to find its way into every aspect of your lives: friends, fashion choices, social life, and, of course, your living spaces.

When young folks (or the young-at-heart) are building a living space, it's important to keep several things in mind:

- Just because you're a kid doesn't mean you have to choose cheap.
- Look for flexible, functional, and fun pieces and accents.
- Superheroes and princesses can have a place in the design of your space, but you'll be happier (and so will your parents) if you add those touches with superhero sheets or princess pajamas instead of themed drapes and bedding.
- Don't shy away from using family heirlooms. Great design is timeless. A grandparent's old bed frame or dresser, for example, can beautifully tie your past to your future. Your living space can also be an opportunity to house family history and create family traditions.
- Parents, this one's for you: Be careful not to be too stingy on the furniture. Investing in a great piece of furniture can be a practical way to carry childhood into adulthood.

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This month, *The Lakelander* visited Samuel, age eight, and his sister, Charlotte, age 12. Both kids were ready to update their bedrooms to reflect their growing tastes. In my line of work, I tend to notice that, in general, boys like to see their treasures, particularly the things that are meaningful to them, displayed. Teenage girls tend to look for a more grown-up feel to their rooms as they transition to young adulthood. It was also important to remember that from a practical standpoint, we didn't want Samuel and Charlotte to outgrow their family's investment after only a few years, so we looked for pieces that could follow them into their grown-up years.

Samuel is a Gator fan. Instead of going all out with orange and blue, his mother and I suggested that we use some of his father's awards and memorabilia from his time at University of Florida. Samuel loved the idea. Together with a National Championship poster, we displayed his father's Florida Blue Key Award* and framed University of Florida diploma as focal points. A coat of paint on an existing bedside chest tied the color scheme to the Florida Blue Key Award. Installing one of my originally designed headboards added a grown-up and original flavor to the space. We used an existing rug to tie all the colors together and complete the look. Samuel's room needed some amped-up storage and shelving for his prized possessions; a vintage metal bakery rack, painted ivory, fit the bill perfectly.

Twelve years old can be a confusing time and often challenging for both grown-ups and kids. The tween years are typically the first opportunity to truly engage in self-expression, and, sometimes, loudly vocalized opinions. Charlotte has a natural design aesthetic that is sophisticated beyond her years. She knew the color palette she wanted for her room, and her mother and I decided this should be a high/

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low project: high class with a low price tag. In designing Charlotte's space, our principal investments rested in custom-designed drapery and headboard. These items can grow with Charlotte and will be nice touches in her first apartment (many years down the road) or could also easily be incorporated into a guest room. In keeping with the budget, we purchased bookcases and a coverlet from IKEA. We also fitted her great grandmother's desk with newly purchased knobs from Anthropologie and incorporated this piece of family history into Charlotte's new space. We then added a newly lacquered and reupholstered vintage cane barrel chair; the edgy, metallic, berry fabric added an additional contemporary feel. Overhead, we hung a freshly painted vintage estate-sale chandelier. The finished room reflects both who Charlotte is today and who she is becoming as well.

By incorporating the three "Fs," we were able to create flexible, functional, and fun living spaces for Samuel and Charlotte. By listening to the children and sorting through our design choices, we worked as a team to satisfy the entire family. We invested in and incorporated key pieces they can take with them into their futures. By using furniture with family heritage, affordable pieces from IKEA, and repurposed vintage furniture in a way that pulled both rooms together, the spaces not only reflect the kids' personalities now, but also leave room to express who they are becoming.

SPACE TO BLOOM AND GROW

Playrooms for the little ones

written by Kristin Crosby
photography by Tina Sargeant and Nate Mundell

As much as parents need some space from their kids, at times the kiddos need a little distance from Mom and Dad, too. To truly blossom and grow, kids need to feel the freedom to be creatively unpredictable, to be in their own space and explore their personalities. What better place than in the safe haven of a playroom? Playrooms and play spaces are best when they scream, "Play! Create! Have fun!" to all who enter, including grown-ups. A playroom is where dreams are born and nurtured, where storybooks come alive — a confined space where no one can break the vivid stream of imagination.

While decorating a playroom (which is a room set aside to be safely deconstructed and destroyed on a daily basis) may seem a tad overwhelming for the



parents who would prefer a Pottery Barn-picture-perfect home, creating a space both visually appealing and kid-inspiring is closer in reach than you may think.

Kid-friendly decor allows little ones to flourish and feel free while also allowing the freedom of allowing messier-than-usual scenarios to unfold — like M&Ms (that weren't supposed to be there in the first place) stuffed in the couch cushions. To achieve a space that engages creativity, critical thinking skills, and artistic expression, consider large pieces that are both statuesque and kid-friendly. Perhaps a worn-in piano with a pop of color (like a light mint, as pictured), a beautiful cello, or daddy's old guitar that he hasn't picked up since college, which add character to a room while creating an outlet for personal expression. You will never know if the next Mozart is residing in your home unless all are fully equipped.

For small touches with a grand impact, try a large vintage map to cover a wall and rustic globes to develop geography knowledge, with a whimsical but less traditionally kid-like look. Or, if you're a fan of the Neverland-inspired playroom, look for whimsical additions that can provide endless entertainment, like a slide, tents, or a boarded wall to let their literary imagination run wild with chalk.

Lastly, a reading nook: the perfect place for a touch of nostalgia. In the photos featured, the benches are made of wood renovated from a historic home's old breakfast nook. Touches such as the rustic wood bring dimension to a room, distinction to activities for a child, and an overall personality that will form memories for years to come.

Create a space that will amuse and enliven, and it may give back more than the satisfaction that your home looks "Pottery Barn perfect" ever could.



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