CABINS & COTTAGES

Buying, Building and Living in Tiny Homes, Cabins & Cottages

Tiny House Living

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Introduction

For a long time the capitalist dream was to own a big house and lots of land. The more space you had the better off you were. If you didn’t have enough space in each room of your house to do a couple of laps on a bicycle you were told you should be ashamed to invite anyone around.

Not only does a big house give you the supposed luxury of empty space in every direction you look but it shows others you have lots of money. After all you need to with the higher taxes, larger energy bills, growing maintenance costs, and all the stuff you need to fill a bigger place.

With the world becoming more urban, with resources becoming more depleted, and with the ability to have your smart phone do just about everything in your life the need to have such a big home has started to be questioned by many. This is where the rise of the tiny living movement came from: a desire to put design over sheer size and to have nothing more in your life than what you really need.

If you’ve come to this book it means you are interested in the smaller home lifestyle: why people do it, how they get into it, and how they make it work. Whether you want to go completely tiny and live in a 100 square foot shipping container or you are just thinking of downsizing to a cottage this book will help guide you on your way to a smaller home and a bigger life.

We will start by looking at the philosophy of smaller living and why anyone in their right would want to do. Once you are convinced we will move on to the practicalities of tiny living, things you need to keep in mind when considering the change, and where to get started with your smaller home. You will walked through the different types of smaller homes available, where best to find or build them, and finally how best to suit your life to a new small home.

What is a tiny or smaller home?

When people talk about tiny homes they can mean a few different things. They all more or less correspond to smaller than average homes but sometimes they are seen as part of a tiny house movement and sometimes they are just seen as a trend in design that many people enjoy on a visual and philosophical level.

People involved in the movement often form physical communities together and build small houses on plots of land they communally own. There is often an interest in building the houses themselves that are catered to their own design and needs. Often there is a desire in these communities to push things smaller and smaller to almost an impractical extent. The interest is as much designing a functional house in a tight space as actually being able to live in one.

Average house size

The average figures for housing size vary (apartment buildings in cities can bring the average down) but by many accounts the average house size in the USA is about 850 square foot and likely larger for free standing houses outside of a city. When compared to the rest of the world only Australia is bigger than the USA's average house size with an average size of 900 square foot. In Europe house size averages range from 250 square foot in Russia to 580 square foot in Germany.

When people talk about tiny houses they are usually thinking between 100 and 400 square foot houses. Keep in mind that is the size of a house and not an apartment. Smaller apartments are often not built to be completely self-contained – you might be expected to use a launderette or a shared bathroom and many see them only as temporary homes.

To put this in perspective a shipping container might have about 400 square foot of space inside and a shed you might keep tools in your garden could be between 50 and 60 square foot inside. Square footage doesn't account for height though and the way many of the smaller tiny homes work best is by using lots of vertical space that might be ignored in a larger build. They are also frequently built in open spaces which invite you to use the outside world more on a daily basis.

Practicality

When you are getting down to a shed size home things do become impractical: you would struggle if there were more than just one person and pets or children are just not going to be possible. You might find, if you weren't prepared, that you'd spend a lot of time throwing away and sorting through clothes and the charm of the place might wear off.

Nevertheless the tiny house movement has done us all a favor because they have flooded the world with ideas and design plans that make living in a small space comfortable, practical and fashionable. We can use this when we are thinking of downsizing or when we want to save money with own our homes early on.

This book will focus more on the tiny homes that are to be lived in by people that want to lead comfortable lives but lessons will be taken from the tiny house movement. The advice here is useful whether you want to live full time in a smaller home or whether you are just interested in building a cabin to live in a few months of the year.

Why live in a smaller home?

Smaller houses don’t work for everyone after they’ve work out all their needs and requirements. If you work from home, have a lot of guests over, have children, have a disability, need lots of storage space, or you truly do use all of your space then you can only make so many compromises with smaller space.

For many of us though, we either don’t even begin to use the space we have or we find we fill it with junk. Ultimately we end up wasting time and energy on things we don’t want or need. Even for many of the people in the list above, who cannot commit to a true tiny home, there is still room to downsize and you might find that a smaller space helps because it is easier to maneuver, clean, or maintain.

Even if you could stand to have a smaller space to live in, the question is still why should you bother choosing a smaller home? Extra space is often a plus and it leaves you with options that less space doesn’t. Depending on how small you go you might not be able to just buy, for example, a pool table if you want to or even splurge on a really large television. If you have space you have fewer restrictions, or so it seems.

The truth is that extra space also creates restrictions that you might just not have thought about yet. There is no right or wrong in the big or little house debate but there are undeniable advantages to very small homes. In this section we will look at what small homes give you in terms of price, maintenance, location, and design that bigger homes do not.

Price

The initial low prices of smaller homes can be seriously overstated by some people: especially those heavily into the tiny home movement. Figures suggest that the average tiny house costs just $23,000 to build while a typical house costs $270,000. That sounds like a big saving but it’s not a number you can trust too much. A cabin is likely to cost you between $60,000 and $100,000 while cottages vary enormously depending on size, type and location.

Lots of tiny house owners are very thrift focused and love building things cheaply and under-embellishing the low cost of their build. They often don’t include the cost of their own labor, the time they’ve lost building instead of working, or even the cost of the land. It might also not factor in that some of the tiny houses are not seriously built to be lived in.

What is undeniable is that building a smaller house is cheaper and that smaller home owners are in far less debt and much more likely to own their own home outright. The difference in price between a two, three and four bedroom house can be enormous and importantly you can't really buy many one bedroom homes. There is not an option to buy a good large home cheaply and they rarely build them small. If you want to go small you will often have to build it yourself or move to a new location.

It is likely you can save money upfront with a tiny home and if you have the time and resources you can save a great deal of money, but the savings are not really to be found in the initial price. The savings come longer term in the cheaper maintenance and energy bills, the much lower taxation on tiny properties, and likely far lower interest payments on a mortgage – if you have one at all. There is even less impetus to buy things for your home: for example, your kitchen is only so big, you don't need a large coffee maker or enormous fridge.

It's not an exaggeration to say your bills and house taxes could be cut more than in half if you move to a smaller home. With some of them you can even turn to wood fire heating and save more. Take that with the lower initial costs, fewer legal fees, and less interest to pay and you get more money freed up. More money equals more savings and more interest for you to keep.

There are some downsides to keep in mind though. You might struggle to get a bank loan if you are intending to build or buy a home because it does often not have huge re-sale value. This is an unfortunate bind for many people because their house is their main financial asset in life and a tiny home still requires maintenance but doesn't necessarily offer a repayment in the end.

Maintenance

Some people struggle with keeping smaller houses tidy because they are so used to large spaces that they don't realize the level of organization you need to adopt to avoid your floor become an impassable mountain of clothes and scrunched up paper. Yet once you get used to this keeping a tiny space tidy takes almost no time at all. In fact you'll often find it rarely gets messy in the first place with your new regime.

The biggest draw of tiny home maintenance comes in the form of having less space to look after. There is less guttering to clear out, less outside space to clean down, and less floor space to get crumbs out of. Fewer windows to clean, fewer spaces for rodents to get in, and less space that needs to be ventilated. You can get smaller and much cheaper heaters that can heat up multi-purpose rooms that you might be able to repair yourself and can be replaced cheaply. You can even splash out on really good air conditioning if you wanted to: only one or two rooms need cooling.

Location

Location can work against tiny houses as much as it works with them. But for some people the advantages are extremely useful. You only need a small plot of land to build a tiny home and if you are good at wrangling the right deals this can cost you almost nothing. Sometimes friends with lots of land are happy for you to buy a small slice from them for pennies.

Tiny houses can and have been built almost anywhere. Whether they are nestled into small spaces among other houses in big cities, built on the shorelines of lakes and oceans, or placed as a dot in the middle of a sprawling and empty landscape. You can avoid imposing too much of an eyesore on some pretty scenery and they are easier to maintain off the grid and far away from larger settlements.

They can give you the opportunity to add a small home for an older relative or a rental

opportunity for students, commuters, or a site like Airbnb. If you can get planning permission they can be built anywhere and they will be among your cheapest option for building or buying a home.

One of the most exciting features is that you can have maneuverable homes that can move location with you. Cabin style homes can be placed on wheels and prefabricated homes can be placed in a myriad of difficult locations which helps to cut down on future building costs.

Design

The reason for the devout following of tiny homes among many people is almost definitely because of the design opportunities they offer. Ever driven down a street of identical homes or found that most houses look the same with only tiny variations in the arrangement of furniture?

A smaller house gives you the opportunity to design nearly every element of your house from the ground up and it demands that you create an interior that is highly functional and completely personal. Even if you follow a plan created by someone else you will be able to add your own spin on the inside. Rather than just putting your furniture in box of a house you can change the shapes, the contours of the building, and even how you relate and interact with the space around you.

A lot of the best design features come out of necessity and restriction and that is especially true in small spaces. You will find unique ways of putting storage in your normal furniture

and discover techniques for making furniture that still looks good but can be easily folded away when you are done with it. You will feel compelled to start designing and building your own furniture because it’s the best way to ensure it fits in the space you have.

If you can have all the storage and functionality you need in a small and stylish space the question becomes why have anything more? You are able to choose only the elements you and enjoy and with less space you are able to spend more on fixtures and materials that you really enjoy.

Having a consistent and unique design becomes possible when you only have a few smaller spaces that need to be filled with it and you can build your chosen look into every feature if you wish. Few things will be out of your control in a house this size and every decision becomes important when it impacts what else you can do.

You can start to think vertically and see your home in a new way. Things can be stacked on top of each other and wall space becomes an opportunity to hold things which makes art out of your everyday objects. You aren’t restricted to inside versus outside space and you can have opulent features such as a courtyard for a minimal price.

You can take your eyes even higher and consider using the space on top of the building if you have a roof that can be built and bear extra weight. Your small plot of land can have two layers on the inside and two layers on the outside and more character than most traditional houses could dream of.

Philosophy

A lot of the financial and practical considerations of a tiny house are important but in the end you are only going to opt for a tiny house or smaller living space if the philosophy of living simply and more efficiently really appeals to you. If it does then the obstacles are just that: things for you to overcome.

There are many appealing aspects behind the spirit of tiny living. It is not quite a minimalist approach because you are not necessarily trying to get rid of material things you don’t need. You are just trying to be honest about your needs and desires and to live in a way that focuses on you. You are trying to have a home that exists to serve you and not the other way around.

There are very few people that don’t find the prospect of having just the things they need to be inviting. The thing to keep in mind is that the things you need don’t have to be basic survival equipment, it’s an invitation to really define yourself and your life as you see it. It’s a way of having space that is just the things you love and the things you need.

You also come to the ethical side of tiny homes which is that they have a minimal imprint on the earth and you are in control of how much damage and resources you take to use it. It’s entirely possible to use lots of recycled materials to make your home and to build it with solar panel and a design that naturally keeps it warmer with the help of the sun.

You can take a step back from the world that is forcing you to consume more and more and to give nothing back and live more organically. You can take your home and place it among nature if you wish. One of the more popular design elements of tiny homes is to have large windows: sometimes the size of the entire wall.

The purpose of these windows is an old design trick to create more space in your home but it actually lets the outside world into your living space and creates a dynamic you may never have been familiar with before.

Smaller living is a way to give yourself more freedom by getting rid of the clutter you’ve filled your life with and to come back into contact with your needs and the needs of the planet. It is this more than anything that keeps drawing people to tiny homes.

Moving to a smaller home

Once you've decided you would like to downsize the question becomes what kind of home you would like to move to. Many different types of buildings and homes can offer you the ability to design your own space and to live simpler and this doesn't just have to be the tradition small wooden tiny hour or shipping container home.

The first question is to consider whether you would be happy just moving to an apartment or smaller home that has already been built. If you just want to save money on maintenance and you have little desire to design and build a house or to have maneuverability or to live off the grid this may be the option for you.

There are advantages to doing this. If you own the space instead of renting it then the money you've saved on a smaller house will allow you to fully renovate it to your specifications and to use the tiny house design to help you in that respect.

There will also be definite re-sale value to these properties. Seriously consider what it is you want from the smaller home before investing in anything too wacky. There are lots of small character homes that can fit your needs in the world you just have to look for them.

There is also the possibility of renovating a space you already have or building on to a property you own. Let's say you already own a home but you really want to do things differently. You can add on an extension or convert your garage into a tiny home far easier than building a new one. The planning permission is likely to be easier to get and it should be quite a cheap option. You can then simply rent out your main home to someone else and enjoy your new life in a familiar location.

If you are very interested in a having a tiny house it is a good idea to consider spending some time in one before you go any further to see how it suits you. Sites like Airbnb have hundreds of tiny houses, cabins, canal boats, and other tiny novel places to stay in – often at a low price. Make a mini-holiday from it or consider staying in one near you.

It might be a good idea to first consider buying a tiny house if you like the feel of them. Because the re-sale value is often low you can pick them up cheaply but you do have to find them. You will need to choose what kind of small house you want so here will go through some of the most popular options.

Traditional Tiny House or Cabin

The most conventional tiny house is usually a small wooden one that would have earlier just been called a cabin. The designs and styles of these vary enormously in size and shape.

They are popular because they are relatively easy to build, they can be set-up in a few days or weeks if you have the expertise, planning and skill, and they have a timeless style. When built very cheaply they make excellent holiday homes during the summer without much need for insulation or intense heating. However, with some more solid building materials and good insulation they are also suitable for colder environments.

If you have enough land or property they can be put up easily and planning permission is not too difficult if they are not considered proper residences for living (you need a proper sewage system and other facilities for complete homes). They can also be moved with the right design and many are open to be built with recycled material and they will always look unique.

Perhaps the biggest plus is that you will be able to do a lot of work on this house yourself with only some of the bigger or more technical jobs needing to be outsourced. Only a simple foundation will be required, you can often move many of the parts over piece-by-piece, and people have been building this style of house for centuries with little more than a hammer and nails.

Shipping Container Home

One of the more popular materials for building a tiny home is a shipping container and a lot of people have been getting very excited about them recently. You can purchase them cheaply after years at sea and have them delivered straight on to a foundation. The main structure is already there for a home and the shape makes putting in insulation and living space simple.

They can be quite mobile if you want them to be and with a few of them together you can create a lot of space. They let you have plenty of space for ingenuity as well so you can create the shapes and patterns that interest you.

There are some downsides with shipping containers though. They are not as ready-to-go as they appear and need quite a lot of treatment, reinforcement and insulation to be built. They may also require quite a lot of work in terms of installing windows and doors that you may need a professional to help you with. Often people find the savings made with a container are exaggerated.

The biggest issue with them will be planning permission and re-sale value because not many people want a big square shipping container living next to them and you need a similarly passionate person to buy one from you. Nevertheless shipping containers are a fantastic option – especially if you are building a holiday home or office space.

Mobile homes and trailers

There are many different types of caravans, recreational vehicles, or trailers that can be turned into a smaller home or a tiny house. They can be surprisingly spacious and highly customizable if you wish them to be. If you have the space or land you can put one down permanently (with no intention of having it road worthy) and make as many changes or improvements as you desire with it.

These types of homes have a less than perfect reputation but before dismissing these as viable options for living in ask yourself what it is they don’t offer that you would be looking for in a tiny home. This will help you better understand your needs and help you to see how useful and practical a trailer home can be.

If you own your own piece of land or go to a mobile home park you can create your desired tiny style home with ease and within the confines of the law. Buying the vehicle you want to transform can cost far less than $1000 and once you own it you can gut it completely and change the outward appearance so it doesn’t have to look like a vehicle. You are also able to have more than one vehicle to gie yourself extra space and room.

Many have found great success by converting old buses or trucks into small homes thanks to the large amounts of space they offer and their maneuverability. Especially if you are going to live in a warmer climate these can be a fantastic option.

Mobile homes, modular homes and prefabricated homes can be an excellent solution if you have little desire to actually build a house yourself but you are interested in fixing up

the inside. The shell of the building and the plot of land you need might cost only a few thousand dollars – you’d then own the property outright and could fill it up with all the elements that you wish. In warmer climates the restricted space will not be as noticeable as you can spend a lot of time outdoors.

The advantage of this option is that you are then able to move whenever you wish and to a large variety of different locations and environments. Given the relatively low cost of the property and the fact you’d own it you could allow yourself a lifestyle where you could move as you pleased and your living expenses would be relatively low.

Earth houses and cottages

Conventional wisdom says that you need to build a house out of wood, metal or fired bricks but it is quite possible to make practical homes out of straw, clay, stone, or sand. Often the materials for these homes can be gotten at extremely low prices or even for free if you are cunning enough. Combined with some other recycled materials you can have the kind of home that people have been living in for centuries.

If you have the time and land available then a sod or cob style cottage is perfectly manageable if you are happy with a smaller home. They can be made to be very warm and insulated and large parts of them can be built by amateurs. It is often only the foundations and roof that will require real professional help so long as you have good plans and know what you are doing with the materials.

The re-sale value of such homes will be low but thanks to their charm they could have a long life as a rental and could make good second or holiday homes for you. It is surprisingly easy to have houses like this with plumbing and power and you will guaranteed to have a home that is custom made to your tastes and will work in with their natural surroundings like no others.

If you are especially interested in design and the environment you might even want to consider a solar house. These are sometimes called earth ships and they work by being

built into the earth in a shape that utilizes the suns natural warmth for your own heating. The main complaint is that they can get too warm in summer, even in colder climates. They are not often cheap constructions, even if they use natural or recycled materials, but they are fascinating projects for the right people to undertake.

Boats, tepees and everything else

Considering so many of us live in nearly identical homes it is amazing just how many different designs and types of houses we can turn to if we look a little outside the box. Floating homes or house boats are common in many parts of the world and they can often be cheap with little or no cost for using the space you live on and they offer fantastic opportunities for tiny living.

You might choose to have a longer canal boat or a larger converted ship that you keep near land. They will give you a fantastic lease on how you interact with the place you live in and how you define your home in terms of location. They are clearly not suitable for everyone – least of all those who get seasick. They require lots of maintenance and are not always practical in colder or wetter environments. However, for the right person it is a magical way of living.

For the last two types of house we are going to look at we take inspiration from our childhoods. The first option is to live in a tent, or to be more precise a tepee or yurt. You can’t get much cheaper or easier to put up than these kinds of structures but they can be made permanent and solid with a little bit of support and work. They are also capable of being kept very warm and having all the innovation of tiny home storage and living.

It’s unlikely you would want to live permanently in one of these structures but you can often avoid planning permission with them and they make great temporary homes which could be rented out during other parts of the year.

The last option is to build a tree house. The most obvious barrier to this is having the right land and trees to build such a big structure on. You’d need permission and privacy to do this as well as the confidence your house won’t fall down in a particularly bad storm. Because of those factors having a permanent home in many trees is very difficult but there are advantages.

It’s true that building in a tree is more difficult than building on the ground but you can also avoid the need to have a very deep foundation and it has undeniable charm. Without the ability to properly insulate this home or to have real plumbing you would struggle to live in this home but you could use it for holidays or to live in temporarily.

Getting started with your smaller home

If you've decided you want a smaller home and you have your heart set on something more alternative than just a small apartment you will have to go through the steps of finding the right land, picking the best financing options, choosing the right plans and design, deciding on the material you want, and getting a timeframe and plan ready to begin.

Before doing all of that make sure you have spent enough time in a smaller home to make sure it will really suit your needs and that you want to do it for at least a few years. It could take you up to a year to get the home ready to live in – that is a lot of time to spend if you are going to change your mind after a few months of living in smaller space.

If after some introspection you realize you are just interested in the novelty of downsizing and living in a unique home that's still not a problem. There is no issue with just renting and living in a tiny or small house for a few years until you've had your fun and then moving in to a more conventional, but still small, home later. Why struggle with the small space for a growing family and the possibly bad investment of a tiny house when you can live in one for a while without the same risk?

Rent is likely to be lower and with the poor return on investment with a tiny house buying one already built is unlikely to be the best option unless you are sure there is a market for the kind of home you are interested in. If you decide to rent or build a tiny house make sure you check that it is suitable to live in and that it is completely weather proof. Even if you can get your money back you don't want to suffer through a tiny home that is impossible to live in.

The main attraction for a lot of tiny home owners though is the fact you can build the house yourself. If you just cannot pass up that opportunity then read on to see the initial steps you have to take before you are moving around wheelbarrows of bricks.

Financing Options

Financing isn’t the first step in planning a smaller house but it’s the one that will stop you immediately if you haven’t already got a plan ready. The cost of building and maintaining a smaller home varies enormously depending on what you actually want and how you want to build your home.

It’s unlikely you will be able to do every aspect of the house building yourself and often it’s not sensible as paying someone to fix your mistakes is costly. You also need to keep in mind that time spent building a house isn’t necessarily free if you could have been doing other things, including earning money.

New RVs range from $10,000 to $20,000 dollars, you can buy a prefabricated cabin from $40,000 to $100,000 and the huge range of tiny homes can cost as little as $2000 dollars and go up to $50,000 to $70,000 to buy a pre-made one or to have lots of professional help. On average it costs people about $20,000 to build a tiny home excluding the price of the land and a well-equipped interior.

The trailer home option is nearly always going to come in cheapest because you don’t

need to own your own land, it will come with appliances and facilities built-in, and there are few construction costs involved unless you want to make changes. The price of a prefabricated home or cabin is generally a fixed price as the price includes installation and you simply need to put furniture in them.

The cost of a tiny house varies so much because of the different needs you have. Some people are happy to live off the grid with just one room and without true plumbing. The cost they work out does not include their own time and assumes some experience and familiarity with building a larger structure.

If you want more space and home comforts it will cost you more – the more time you are willing to put into the project the cheaper it will appear. Time is not as free as it appears though and the longer it takes to build a house the more you have to pay to live somewhere else.

The question comes how to finance a smaller home and the answer isn't always that simple if you are not going to just sell your home and buy a new one with a small mortgage and what you made from the last house. If it's going to take you a long time to build a house then you need somewhere to live during that time.

If you choose to buy an RV or premade tiny house or cabin you will often have a finance option to pay for the home in installments. You'd just need to make sure you had the financing ready for any land you might need in the first place. Things get more difficult when you want to do a long and potentially costly build.

If you have enough money or assets then should be able to find a way to fund $20,000 on your own with enough planning and happiness to take a risk on the tiny home. Certain builders and contractors for tiny homes might be classified as RVs so you can pay in installments as well. If you want to build everything yourself (and with a few contractors) but you don't have any way of raising roughly $20,000 and enough money to sustain yourself while building it then you may need to get a bank loan.

Banks are generally not allowed to give out loans they feel can't be paid back or are for buildings that won't create a return on the investment. A tiny house that is not legal or does not meet basic building or housing regulation won't be able to be financed with a larger construction loan because there is no way for a bank to make money back on this home. In other words, a bank is not going to loan you $20,000 to build a home that is not only worth less than $20,000 in re-sale value, but is in fact illegal and might need to be demolished.

The best option if you want a home like this of your own is to use recycled materials, to build as much of it as you can yourself, to try and borrow a little from family or friends and then to take out a smaller personal loan when you need to and with a plan to pay it back. If you are doing this merely because you want to have a cheap home you own completely you might find it is better to just get a mortgage on an already built cottage.

Getting the right land

If you've got financing in place or you have a reasonable idea how you would get it the next question is about finding and buying land for a smaller home. Without land to build on you can't build your own smaller house.

When it comes to RVs you have lots of choice to place a home down permanently and lots of land is available for the express purpose of putting down prefabricated cottages and cabins. Things only really become difficult if you want to place a small cottage next to an already existing house so you can rent the main property and live small next door. In that instance you will just have to apply for planning permission and see what you can get away with.

Once again things are more complicated if you just want to buy land for a tiny house. Because a lot of the tiny houses are, well, tiny you can sometimes get away with just building one on land that is out of the way but that can be fraught with legal issues. Zoning laws vary a lot and you need to be sure how much land you need to be able to build a residence and the kind of facilities that home has to have (laws like this are usually

made to protect people from slum lords rather than to punish people that want to live off-the-grid).

Often tiny houses are built on trailers and are classified as trailer homes which means they are not held to the same level of restrictions or rules as a conventional house or one built directly on to the ground.

A 400-square-foot house will need considerably more space than that to get built and you will want to be sure you fit into the area. If you pick some land that is further away from large settlements of people you'll want to make sure you aren't going to building your house next to a future airport. For a fee estate agents can help you get the right land with the right size.

If you have requirements such as living near a certain location you should try to find the land first and then pick a plot of plan to fit that. There are thousands of plans to pick from and you don't want to become too fixated on one at the cost of an ideal piece of land. Nevertheless, make sure you have an idea of how big your plot should be.

Cost of land varies depending on its location and while it is tempting to get the cheapest and most remote land possible keep in mind that smaller homes often require more from the community around them. You might find you want to spend more time outdoors or that spending too long inside a smaller space might drive you crazy. The extra cost of living close enough to use local facilities might actually help you save money in the long term. You don't want to commit yourself to off-the-grid tiny living miles away from another human if you're not 100% certain it is the thing for you.

Picking plans and designs

If you want an RV or cabin you can often look around a model of the one you are interested in before even buying it. You should do this even if it requires you to go out of your way to make it to a showroom. The small cost of travel is long term going to be

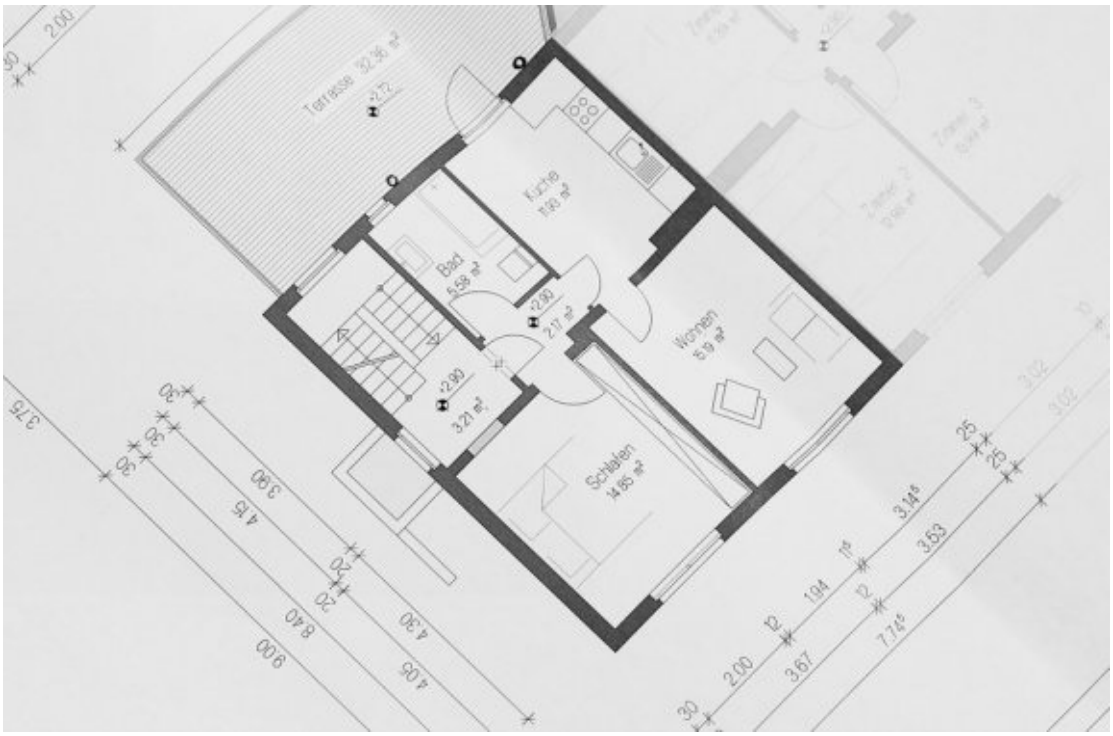
worth it so that you are sure you are happy.

If you are going to build your own home then you will almost certainly need to work from proper plans made by an architect. Some of the plans will be part of a building guide that will give you information about how to put the house up and others will just be the plans with the task left to your imagination on how to follow it.

You can choose a plan based on the square foot it would provide you with as well as the amount of loft or roof space and other features that interest you. The things to look out for when choosing a plan is that it comes with information about how to frame the walls, detailed information on how to wire and plumb the property and also isometrics and cutaways that will show you individual parts of the build that are more difficult. Some plans will also come with the weight of the final build, the types of materials you will need and sometimes even the cost of the materials.

You can pay anywhere from nothing to $800 for a plan with the average price being $200. Many plans will feature reviews online that will tell you if the price is worth it. The more confident you are with building the cheaper the plans you can likely get away with. Ultimately good planning can save you a lot of time and money so don’t be afraid to spend a little extra here if you believe the plans can help you significantly later. $100 spent here could save you $700 for an electrician later.

Only you can really choose the plan you want and you should determine based on your needs. Whatever type of property you are thinking of buying you should write down a list of your needs and wants. Sort them in to must haves and wants. Then try and cut that list down further if you are really trying to save space and time. It’s quite possible to only have a bedroom, bathroom and a general purpose kitchen and lounge room. If you want to stretch this further you could have a fold down bed in the general purpose room.



Try to imagine what that space would be like where you are living now. Map out 100 square foot in the space you are in and see what could fit in there and how comfortable you could be. If you're really unsure try to re-arrange the furniture you have to now and try to use only that space for a few days. Picking the right plan that fits your needs and tells you what to do and buy is vital to a smooth building of a smaller home.

Don't feel you have to stick to any type of building type. If you are interested in a tiny house you might find that building a cottage or cabin will fit your needs just as well and they will often not be that much more expensive, if at all.

Choosing building material

The plan you choose will give you an indication of the materials you need but it won't necessarily tell you, for example, what kind of wood you must have. The choice is up to you and this is often where a lot of fun of building a home of your own is.

If you opt largely for wooden structures, walls, and flooring then you are able to enter the world of reclaimed wood. It is generally not advised to use old wood for foundations, frames, or windows because these things need to be very solid and you don't want to risk them being rotten but you can use reclaimed wood for many other aspects of your home.

In general older wood is already treated and proven to be sturdy.

If you have the time and materials you can find this wood yourself and take it back to your building site. You might even want to just take it to a building site and have it cut for you for a small fee. You can find this wood almost for free at old barns, salvage yards, shipping crates, or just at the local dump. Check and ask for permission first but many people are more than happy for you to take their scrap wood away. You will also be able to find scrap metal and furniture that could make building parts of your home even easier.

Getting a plan together

The average time to build a standard family house with lots of help from contractors is around 6-7 months. With a smaller home this could much quicker or if you are doing a lot of it yourself it could take over a year. If you choose a prefabricated home it could take you just a few weeks after ordering it assuming you have no big alterations to the property. Permits can take up to a month to get and they come with their own fees.

The most difficult part of creating a plan to build a home is orchestrating when to sell one that you might already own. It’s unlikely that you can finance two homes at once so you will need to try and time the two as close together as possible. If you are building a home you are in a slightly better position because you can prolong putting money down into the building but you will have to determine how you are going to live while the home is built if you are dependent on the money tied up in your home.

If you need a permit you will already have contacted an architect and you should have a good idea of what is required to get your home up and ready. Plan out a reasonable timeframe over the six months and get ready to commit yourself to the plans. You’ll need to know when to get certain materials delivered and when other parts need to be finished. If you’re building on limited space this is very important as you might not have anywhere to store the materials outside of the building site.

The last thing you need to be sure of is what you are going to build and what you are not going to build. The general rule should be that if you aren’t confident in doing it then don’t. Many things are simpler than they seem but paying to fix something you broke is paying twice for the same thing. Get some experience building smaller projects first if you are a complete novice.

Downsizing and living little

You should have an idea now about whether you want to buy or build your own home and the kind of property that would suit you. No what you pick be it cabin, cottage, RV or tiny house you will most likely have to downsize. Even if you are young and don’t have many possessions you’ll probably find you need to reevaluate your priorities.

In this chapter we will look at tips for downsizing what you already have and then consider different options for making the most of the space in a smaller home.

The downsized mind

Downsizing seems easy until you’re at the point when you’ve thrown out most your unwanted goods but there is much more for you to put in the garbage. It might surprise you want you don’t want to throw out when you start getting around to doing it. It seems like so many of the tools, clothes and toys we own could come in handy once again in the future and there is always the fear that once you’ve thrown something out you’ll end up buying it again.

When you start you need to be frank about what you need and whether you will use something. Make three piles of things: what you absolutely need, what you are happy to throwaway, and things you just want to have around. Then try to add the things in the last pile into the middle one.

The hardest things to throw away are usually sentimental in nature but instead of giving in and throwing each item in a box to go moldy and forgotten celebrate these things. If you have childhood memorabilia try to scrapbook it then place that book on a book easel. If there are other pictures you have in storage why not consider placing them on the wall and throwing away those that you don't even want to look at on your walls.

Clothing, sports equipment, kitchen utensils, DIY materials, and pointless furniture tend to be the main culprit of bulk that fills up your life. It's true that old CDs or books can take up a lot of unnecessary space but if you use and enjoy these items you can easily make room for them in a way that is pleasing to look at. It's much harder to do this for a pasta maker or stool you don't want to use.

If you really struggle and you have some spare room now consider putting everything you're unsure about in that room. If you find yourself still not using then put what you can up for sale and put the rest into the trash. If it is too sentimental then find a way to put it into the space you live in a tasteful way.

Do be sensible though; don't throw out what actually has value just to have a sense of downsizing. There is nothing inherently wrong with stuff and people have a tendency to exaggerate how much of a hold this stuff has on you to avoid dealing with the real issues in their life. It's rarely that owning too many kitchen appliances is a deep source of misery on its own.

Lastly try to take pride in and love what you have around you. Downsizing isn't an attempt to destroy yourself but to celebrate what you do have and give it the attention you want to. Don't make your life harder or more expensive just so you can brag that you don't own something. Try to stick to the idea that if you need something it will find a place in your home.

Making the most of your space

Once you've gotten rid of your stuff you are going to have to find ways of filling out your smaller home so that you are just living with piles of stuff on top of you while feeling smug that you managed to fit it all in your new home.

If you are not building your own home you might want to consider if you can incorporate some space saving techniques into the space you are going to be buying and there are definitely some decorating tips you can use.

The point of a small home is to have a complete home that doesn't feel like it has restrictions on space and downsizing is the first way to get there. The second involves

storage and decoration to make things easily accessible without cluttering up your free space.

What you want to think about is hiding whatever you can, making sure all items have more than one purpose if you can, using light intelligently, and trying to make things vertical wherever possible.

There is no reason for any couch to not have a draw underneath it or for a set of stairs to not have storage built into the in some way. If you're struggling to find places to put utensils or clothes then look to the walls. Hooks and shelves can make the ground floor more accessible and they can do so without having your possessions closing in around you. Make a list of all the things you have and see if you can design a room where they can all nearly be put away – there is usually a way.

Color is very important and you don't want to emphasize the cramped or small spaces you have with dark colors. Keep it bright or white and make sure to have as many open and airy curtains as possible. If you need to keep your windows concealed for privacy try to use some net curtains to at least let the light in.

Olds tricks with mirrors are staples for smaller space to make things seem much larger with very little effort. One or two larger mirrors in a room can really bring the focus away from tighter walls and into the space in front of you. Mirrors can also be taken further by having reflective furniture or choosing to have glass cabinets or tables.

When it comes to being vertical try to make visitors to the home look up instead of around

– many smaller homes can still have high ceilings and you should show them off. Put up pictures and interesting items of shelves. Make your possessions into works of art. Have thinks tastefully stacked where you can to make interesting decoration pieces and to help save you room.

When designing smaller spaces and smaller storage always keep utility in mind, if you have to pull several things out to get the one thing you use all of the time there is a good chance you won’t put your storage system back together. You’ll always end up doing what is easiest and that can mean you end up living in a cramped environment.

Lastly make sure everything is as multi-purpose and necessary as it needs to be. Do you need a coffee table, computer desk, dining table, and dress table? Or could you just have one table that fills all these needs? When designing your small space try to compartmentalize so that each different section of a room feels like its own space, you can do this with different colored walls, different decoration themes and clever uses of rugs and room dividers.

Make sure that whatever you do to decorate that it uses the space well and makes you feel comfortable.

Conclusion

Small homes are only too small if you design them to be that way and if you insist on living the lifestyle made for a larger home. Once you recalibrate, downsize and re-invent the way you interact with your living space a small home is just a more efficient and thoughtful way of living the same life you always have.

It’s quite possible that you have spent your life living in your home from moment-to-moment with little thought given to how the different items compliment each and whether or not the features and rooms are built towards your lifestyle. By moving to a smaller home and taking charge of your space you will be able to dictate how things should be.

The most crucial thing to figure out when considering downsizing is what your needs are for your specific home. If you cannot think of a good reason to have lots of space or lots of possessions then you have no reason not to downsize and live in a cabin, cottage, or tiny home that would suit your character and personality better. Move to a smaller home and start living large.

Tiny Homes
Tiny House Design Tips

Tiny House Living

Introduction

Starting out on the tiny home adventure can be really exciting. Those who get into it feel like they are taking on the world and doing something that is great for themselves, society, and even for the environment. But once they get started, there are some snags that tend to creep up. Many people who decide to live in a tiny home become worried about how they are going to design and organize their tiny home so that everything is able to fit. If you are one of those who are worried about not being able to make this all work while keeping some of your modern conveniences, this is the guidebook for you. It is full of all the tips and tricks that you need to get started on the perfect design for your new tiny home.

Chapter 1 starts out with the bedroom. This is a hard room to go with because you are going to want to fit a lot of personal items into here but you will be limited on the amount of space that is available. This chapter is going to take some time to look at some great tips to get the most out of the whole bedroom. Chapter 2 moves us on to the bathroom. This is probably the most complicated room in your whole tiny house. You have to worry about fitting all the stuff from a full sized bathroom, which is hard enough as it is, into an even smaller space. Tiny homes usually don’t devote too much space to the bathroom so this room will take a bit of creativity to make it work.

Chapter 3 moves on to another important room, the kitchen. If you are an avid cook or just enjoy making some delicious meals for the whole family, then you will want to spend some time designing this room. From smaller versions of your favorite cooking tools and more, you will find that quite a bit is able to fit inside even the tinniest of kitchens. Next we will explore chapter 4, where we learn how to turn the most used room in the whole house, the living room, into one that has everything we need. From getting rid of the entertainment system to cutting the cord, you will be surprised at how easy it is to change a few things around and see some amazing results.

Chapter 5 will spend a bit of time exploring some of the things you should consider when you are looking for storage options in a tiny home. Storage is one of the most important

things that you will work on when you think about the tiny home and finding the right options that are sturdy enough and can last through it all can be a challenge. We will use this chapter to find the perfect options to make everything fit in this home. And chapter 6 finishes out this guidebook with some tips and tricks that you can use on any and every room in your tiny home, to make designing and organizing a breeze.

Designing a tiny home has a lot of unique challenges that are all its own. You have to worry about fitting a lot of things, your modern conveniences, into a much smaller place than you are used to. But with the help of this guidebook, you will be able to get it all to fit without having to pull your hair out.

Chapter 1: Organizing and Designing Your Bedroom

The first room we are going to concentrate on is the bedroom. This is a room that is really important. You will want to hold a lot of things, such as your clothes, blankets, shoes, and more, but you always want to have some extra room available so you can actually sleep on the bed. This is a hard enough task when it comes to your regular home; when you try to move all of this stuff into your tiny home, it becomes more of a challenge than you would think.

So, we are going to take some time to concentrate on the bedroom so you can still fit in all of your stuff, albeit you will probably have to downsize a bit, and still have plenty of room to feel comfortable and get a good night of sleep.

The first step you should concentrate on is getting rid of some of the clutter. You will not want to bring everything you own in your big house over to the tiny home. There just isn't going to be the room, and if you're honest with yourself, you are not going to use half these things anyway. So first, it is time to go through and sort out the things you would like to keep and those you would like to get rid of. Any old clothes you haven't worn in six months or more, any shoes that are broken ,or any lose ends that you don't plan to use again should all be thrown out or donated. This simple step can help you to have a lot more room in your bedroom.

Now you need to organize. If you have a closet in your tiny home, you will be able to use this to your advantage. Make sure you get some over the door shoe hangers to hold your shoes and other random objects. Or you can get a magic hanger that will store the clothes in a vertical manner rather than horizontal so you can save even more space. This is the place where you will probably throw a lot of your extras from the rest of the house so maybe consider separating the closet in two parts; half can be for your clothes and other necessities that are good for the bedroom and the other half can be for any storage that you need for the rest of the house.

As you are organizing the closet, take some time to go through your clothes. Hopefully you were prepared for this move to the tiny home before you got there, but some people underestimate how much space they actually get to use. As you are hanging up your clothes, consider if they are even worth all this work. When was the last time that you actually wore that outfit? Are you keeping it around because it has some sentimental value to you? What is the real reason that you are keeping that outfit in the closet?

In most cases, you will still be able to reduce the amount of clothes, and other items, from your closet while you are going through this stage. Before moving in, you may have assumed that you had more space than you really do. Once you see how crowded things are, you will stop talking yourself out of getting rid of items just so you have enough room to walk around.

Don’t have a closet because of space? You need to get a bit more creative. If there’s room, a standing hanger can work really well for this process. Or you can choose to hang up some clothesline high in the room and use this to store a lot of the things that you would like to store. Even in a tiny spot you will be able find lots of storage areas. Make sure that you put this clothesline up high enough so that no one gets hurt if they get up in the middle of the night and forget that the clothes line is there.

You can also add some storage under the bed to help you out as well. You are not using the space under the bed so this is just wasted if you don’t use it up in some method. So head to the store and get a few good storage containers. Make these long and thin so they fit nicely under your bed. Plastic with a securely locked lid is often the best so you don’t have to worry about anything getting ruined in this area. Another idea is to put little drawers under the bed. These can work as another closet, or your only closet if you’re really short on space, and store clothes or other necessities inside.

Another option that you may want to consider in your tiny home is going for a smaller bed. While it may seem nice to have a big huge bed, this is going to take up a lot of space that you just don’t have in your tiny home. If you are willing to give up storage and walking space in the bedroom, go ahead and keep the larger bed. But if you would like to have some extra room for a dresser or some other items in the bedroom, you should

consider downgrading to something a bit more economical. You really can’t tell that much difference between a king sized bed and a queen sized one, but the amount of room that you will save can make all the difference. Switching down to an even smaller size will save you a ton more space as well.

When it comes to your bedroom, you also need to take the time to make your bed each day. This alone is going to help you to keep the room looking more open and bright and it only takes you a few seconds. Consider throwing out any of the extra pillows that go on the bed. While these may look nice as decorations, when you are really short on space, you won’t want to waste it with all the extra pillows lying around. Once the bed is all made and ready to go, you can pick up a few of the odds and ends on the floor before moving on with the rest of your day.

Keeping your bedroom cleaned up and ready to go can take some time and energy. You may need to spend a few days in this room in order to get the results that you are looking for. But by reading through this chapter and trying out a few of the easy tips, you will find that it is easier than ever to make your bedroom look amazing.

Chapter 2: Making the Most out of Your Bathroom

Bathrooms can be a pain. Even in your regular sized home, you were probably always fighting with trying to find enough room in the bathroom in order to hold all of your stuff and not let it get in the way. Now that you have moved into a tiny home, you may have kissed your morning routine goodbye and prepared to live a new lifestyle without all your favorite bathroom products. But just because you are now in a tiny home doesn't mean you have to give up all your old favorites for the bathroom. With some of the tips and tricks in this guidebook, you will find it is easier than ever to get everything you want in the bathroom without feeling like it is going to burst.

Put the shower above the toilet

Rather than having a separate place for the shower and for the toilet, both of which can take up a ton of space in your bathroom, why not have them in the same location. It is pretty easy for your contractor to arrange this so that the shower head is right over the toilet and you can still get the water on you during the shower. You will save a lot space, as well as money on the plumbing you are using in this small area.

Put the shower outside

If you are in an area that allows it, you may want to consider putting the shower outside your tiny home. This is nice in camping areas or if you're able to put a fence around your backyard. Then you can just save all this space and take a shower outside. This won't waste anything on the inside, but you can stretch out and use as much of the outside space as possible.

There are a few problems with this idea, although it is one that is suggested by many tiny home owners. First, if you aren't in an area that is shielded or you don't have a fence, it might be a little awkward to take a shower outside where everyone can see you. Another

issue is if you live up north. No one wants to go outside in the middle of winter in order to take a shower. If either of these are a problem for you, it is probably best to go with the previous option and put the shower inside.

Consider over the door shoe holder

Shoe holders don’t just have to be used to hold your shoes. In fact, these can be one of your greatest assets when it comes to the bathroom, or any other room in your home for that matter. With these, you can just hang the shoe holder over the door, this is space you aren’t using in the first place, and now you have some handy storage holders for all your bathroom needs. You can put shampoos, conditioners, soaps, and so much more right in these holders. They will stay upright without worries of spilling, the shoe holder is often water proof, and since these are easy to clean, you won’t have to worry about a mess.

Add in a dual purpose towel rack

Hanging your towels up is important if you want to continue reusing them and not have to pay as much to get laundry done. But finding a place to hang these towels in your own bathroom may seem like a bit chore. Rather than letting this get in your way, consider getting a towel rack. There are a lot of great camping options that you can choose from. These will fold out so you can grab the towel that is right for you, but easily fold back down so all the towels are out of your way. You can chose the size that you would like to have based on the amount of towels you would like to hang up or how many people are in your family.

Don’t use a sink

It is best if you keep the sink out of your bathroom. This is going to take up a lot of space and you don’t really need it. Sure, it may seem like a nice convenience, but you can always use the sink that is in your kitchen rather than adding in more plumbing and wasting more space in a room that really can’t afford it. Between the shower and the toilet, and maybe a few shelves if you can find the room, you are already going to be pretty low on space in most of the bathroom.

So when you are low on space in the bathroom and want to free it up a bit, get rid of the sink completely. Either leave this area open without anything in the way or consider adding in some more shelving. No matter which method you choose, you will find that this is going to free up space in the bathroom, or you can use it to add on space to another room in the house, and you haven’t wasted as much space as before.

Hang stuff from the ceiling

If you are short enough, or can remember that things are hanging from the ceiling, you may want to consider hanging things up in the bathroom. You are going to be really limited in this space, most contractors aren’t going to spend a ton of time making this room look amazing. But you can get a few baskets or other containers and hook them to the ceiling. Then just fill them up with any of the bathroom necessities that you need; from shampoos and conditioners to soaps and everything else. Hanging them from the ceiling keeps some of the other spaces in the bathroom free while still keeping all of your bathroom necessities in an easy to access place to use whenever you need.

The bathroom is one of the hardest places for you to organize and still get all of your things inside. There are a million items that you will need to bring to this tiny bathroom but you are going to only have space for a few things. But with some of these tips, you will be able to fit just a few more things into this ever crowded area.

Chapter 3: Maximizing the Space in Your Kitchen

Now we are on to the kitchen. This is an area that is going to take some time. While you may be able to make the kitchen a bit bigger in your tiny home, at least compared to the other rooms, you will be amazed at how much stuff needs to fit into this area in order to create the delicious meals that your family has come to know and love. It can drive you crazy trying to figure out how to get this all organized and ready so that you have everything you need without feeling crowded.

When you are ready to work on the kitchen, check out some of these easy tips that are sure to help you get started in the right direction.

Use a smaller oven

Being in a tiny home does not mean you have to give up on all your cooking dreams. This is probably one of the things that worry parents the most; how am I going to be able to fit my children when I am stuck with a small microwave or have to just eat camping food. You can still cook some of your favorite meals, you just need to be smart about where you are storing everything and how it is all going to fit together.

There are a few ideas that you can use when it comes to a smaller oven. If you look through camping gear or other stores, you may find that there are several smaller ovens that would fit perfectly into your home. These don’t need to have a permanent place in the house; you can just bring them out whenever you are ready to start cooking, make the meal, and then put it back away. This is a great way to still make all the good meals that you want without taking up a lot of space that you don’t have.

Other appliances on the cupboards

If you want to bring in other appliances to the tiny home to make your kitchen more efficient, you just need to be smart about where you place them. Many tiny home owners want to bring in options like a coffee maker or a microwave so they can still enjoy some of their morning luxuries. But where are you going to put these in the tiny kitchen? Putting them in their regular place, like right on the counter, is going to limit your work space and can make the room so much more crowded.

A better idea is to place the appliances right below the cupboards. This gets them out of your way so that you can use more of the counter space, but makes it really easy for you to still use them whenever you need to. There are a variety of options for you to choose from when it comes to adhesives to get these to stick up to the cupboards and you will love how much space opens up in no time.

Consider an outside grill

Grilling is a great way for you to cook your food. There are so many great food types that can be done on the grill, whether you are dealing with meats, vegetables, fish or something else, that you could feed your family for a long time with just this one cooking method. The problem comes up when you are trying to fit that grill into your tiny home. Many people assume that they will have to give up on this great cooking method because they just don’t have the space for it in their homes.

Luckily, there are a few options that you can choose from when it comes to a grill. One is to just have a grill outside. If you are keeping your tiny home stationary, you won’t have to worry about bringing this grill in all the time and if you get a cover, the grill will be able to last for a long time outside. This can be great news for all those people who love to grill for the big game or just to have some fun with friends and family. Consider getting one that is pretty portable in case you do need to bring it inside on occasion.

Another option is to get some extensions on your stove. Many stoves come with the options of switching things out so that you can do different kinds of baking. You can do roasting, grilling, or just have the regular stove and it takes just a few minutes to switch all

of these out. These extensions don’t really take up that much room and you will be able to stack them on top of each other inside of your cupboards. Any time that you would like to grill, or do some other kind of cooking, you just need to switch these out and try something new.

This idea is great because it is using a tool that is already present in your kitchen and allowing you to use it for more than one thing. You won’t have to find any extra room in order to grill, making it a great choice if you plan to move the tiny home often. To ensure that this is an option for your tiny home, talk to your contractor and see if they are able to put in a stove that has different attachments to make cooking easier.

Wash your dishes by hand

Yes, dishwashers are really nice and can save you some time, but do you really have the room in your tiny home to put one together and have it take up all that space. When it comes to the dishes in your tiny home, it is often best to just do them by hand. Then, instead of wasting all that space on a dishwasher, you can add in another shelf and get some more storage room in the home.

If a dishwasher is really important in the tiny home, you just need to plan accordingly. Go with one that is smaller and won't take up much space. Perhaps consider one that can easily move around so you can just hook it up when needed and then store when you are all done. There are a lot of options that you can go with when it comes to your dishwasher and while it may be better to go without one completely, there are still options that can make life easier for you.

Decorative baskets on the wall to store things

Baskets and other options that go on the walls can work really well when you are short on space in the kitchen. Often we will just pile things on top of each other and hope it all works out. Anything that doesn't fit into the cupboards is often just left lying around or on top of the counter, leaving you even less space to deal with the mess than you had before.

Just because your kitchen is in a tiny home doesn't mean that you are stuck without the room that you need. It just takes a bit more creativity to make it all happen. One way that you can do this is to bring some baskets or other holding containers into the kitchen. This can be a good place to store foods that don't fit into the cupboards, you probably don't have room for a pantry in this home, or some other odds and ends that are taking up space. Perhaps have one basket that is meant to hold all your fruits and vegetables and then some that hold your cans.

You can mix and match the kinds of baskets that you are using. Sometimes it works best to just have a small one available while other times you can have them be larger. Or change them up and have baskets that are all different sizes. It is also up to you what you would like to keep inside the baskets. But no matter how you use them, you are going to be amazed at how much space gets freed up in your tiny kitchen.

Table clothes can brighten up the room.

Decorating in the kitchen is going to be a big challenge. You may have all these grand ideas, but simply getting the cooking equipment into the room is going to take up much of the space that you have available. One place that you can brighten up the room is with a nice table clothe. Invest in a few that are nice and colorful and you can switch them out whenever one starts to look a bit dirty. Also, if you get the table clothes to be long enough, it is fairly easy to store a few things under the table that no one else will notice.

Breakfast nook for your table

A regular table can take up a lot of space in a tiny kitchen. You have to have room not only for the table, but for all its extensions and the chairs. If you are short on space, this is just not going to work. And when you figure out how little you actually use the table, it is probably not worth the time to make the rest of the home fit around this one table.

Instead of wasting all this space, consider getting a little breakfast nook. These are often quite a bit smaller than what you will find in a regular table and it can fit nicely into one of the corners in your home. The chairs often stay put so you don’t need to save extra space for the chairs to go in and out. If you plan it out right, many of these breakfast nooks will provide some storage space underneath the chairs, allowing you a few more places to store items in your tiny home.

Adjustable counter space

Coming up with enough counter space in any kitchen, but especially a tiny home kitchen, is going to be tough. It seems like no matter how much counter space is in your home, you just won’t be able to make it work for the meals you are cooking. But when you are working on the design of your home, consider getting some adjustable counters put in.

With these counters, you can set them up so that whenever you need more space, you can just pull one out. While this will make the kitchen space limited while you are using them, it will make cooking so much easier. Then, when you are all done with the cooking, you can just push the counter tops back in how they go and all the room is back. These are quick and convenient, and if you put them in right when you are building the house, they don’t require any extra effort from you.

If you purchase a premade tiny home, there are still some options for you. Consider getting a few nice cutting boards. Then, when you need more space, you can pull out a

few drawers and set the cutting boards inside. Chop, cook, and do whatever else you need with this new extended counter space. When you are all done, just make sure to wash off the cutting boards and put them away before pushing the drawers back in so you can clear up the space again and not have anyone trip going through the room.

Hang things up high

When it comes to the kitchen, you are going to find that the cupboard space is going to fill up pretty quickly. But that doesn’t mean that you should just leave the items all over the counters and making a mess. There is another option though. Why not consider putting things up high out of the way.

There are some options that you can get at regular kitchen supply stores or online. These can often hook to the wall or one of your cabinets and work nicely by holding on to the items that you really need to keep up out of the way. Use this to hold some of your essential kitchen items including pots and pans as well as some stirring utensils. Not only does this help you out when it comes time to cook, you won’t have to search all around for these items, but it clears up a lot of the cupboard and counter space that you will use for other things in your kitchen.

The kitchen can be a fun area to organize. There are a lot of items that you will want to keep inside this area, but finding the right space and spot for each one is going to seem like a huge task. Thankfully it can be a lot of fun for you to put it all together and find some great ways to get everything in its right place. When you are ready to design your kitchen to be easier to use and make it so you can fit everything in, use some of these great tips in this chapter and you will be set to go.

Chapter 4: Tips and Tricks for Your Living Room

Now we are going to move onto the living room and spend some time looking at some ways that you can get the most out of this room as well. The living room is a space that you will spend a lot of time in when you are home. It is a place to relax, socialize, watch some of your favorite shows, host guests and so much more. In many cases, you are going to spend the majority of your home time in this room.

But because you spend so much time in this one room, you are going to start accumulating many items in here as well. That is why it’s so important to get all of the things organized and ready to go in this tiny room. Here are some of the tips that you can use to ensure all the important items make it into the living room without taking up too much space or causing a lot of clutter that gets in your way.

Lift all the furniture up

One of the first thing that you should do when you start decorating your living room is lift any furniture up that goes into this room. Couches, chairs, bookcases, and so much more take up a lot of floor space when they are down to the ground. This makes it almost impossible for you to get anything else in this space, and when it comes to a tiny home, this means that you have a lot of wasted space.

But when you lift up the furniture, you are now making some room to put other things underneath. You can pick out some boxes that fit the right dimensions and then push them underneath when they are full. This frees up a lot of space in the tiny home, and if the skirts of the furniture are long enough, or you pick out a new cover that can do this, you will find that the items can be hidden pretty easily.

Pick decorations that can serve multiple purposes

The living room is a fun space to spend some time decorating and bringing your personal tastes into the room. But when it comes to decorating in your small home, you need to make sure that everything has a dual purpose. You can choose some nice decorations to put all over the room, but make sure you are able to do something else as well. For example, put a nice little sign that says something like ‘welcome’ or ‘family’ and have it work as a key holder as well. You can go to many craft and interior design stores and you will be able to find a lot of examples that work well for this idea.

Minimize the furniture

While it might be a nice idea to have as much furniture as possible in your living room, this is not the best idea when it comes to your tiny home. In this area, you will need to minimize the amount of furniture that you put into the room. Even if you host a ton of people in your home, you may have to be careful and find other methods since this room is going to be pretty small for now.

Depending on the size of space that you put into your living room, you will not be able to get a lot inside. Put just enough furniture for the amount of people that you will have in the house. A simply rocking chair and a small love seat will often be enough to help you out. If you need more, try to pick out some minimalistic furniture that is not going to take up as much room when you are limited.

When you are picking out furniture to put into your tiny home living room, try to be as minimalistic as possible. You do not need to have a ton of huge couches and overstuffed chairs in the room. This is just a lot of material that is getting in the way and won’t really add much when you are low on space. In addition, you will not need to take furniture that has a lot of extra inside. While these may seem nice, you will find that they just take up unnecessary space that you can use for something else. It is best to pick out simple furniture that is comfortable, but takes up as little space as possible. This can help you to

get as much into the space without taking up more than you have available.

If you do host a lot of people in your home, consider using some foldable furniture. These can be nice since you can bring them out whenever someone comes over, something that can make even the biggest house feel small, but you can put them away the second you are all done with them. There are many great varieties that you can choose from that will be comfortable but take up minimal space when not in use.

Multipurpose furniture

Don’t just buy furniture because it looks nice and you think it fits well into your home. Make the furniture work for you as well. There are lots of chairs, couches, and ottomans that can work well as storage units as well. These will allow you to just lift a cushion up before storing all of the items that you need. If possible, pick out one of these options; if you are limited in your area, even just one storage container ottoman can make a difference. These options allow you to store all the things that are important and that you need in the living room, without taking up any extra space in the room.

Consider bookshelves

Book shelves can look really nice in your living room. This is a room that can collect a lot of odds and ends from books, magazines, and movies. Having a nice corner book case can make all the difference in how much space you get in the living room and you will be able to keep everything out of the way. The living room is one area that is going to get dirty in no time at all. So you have to come up with the right organizational method to keep it all out of the way. The corner book case is one of the best options, although a stand alone one, or any other storage method that gets stuff out of the way and off the floor, can make a huge difference.

Put the TV up

If you are bringing a TV into the tiny home, don’t even think about bringing an entertainment system as well. In a true tiny home, you are not going to have anywhere near the amount of room that is required to hold that big of an item. Bring in a flat screen TV or don’t bring in one at all. With a flat screen, you can put this up on the wall and not have to worry about the amount of space that it takes up.

Get rid of the cords

It may be tempting to get a lot of the best when it comes to TV entertainment, but this can create a lot of cords that get in the way. Between the gaming system, the DVR, DVD player and more, you are going to end up with a ton of cords that are all just getting in the way. Rather than letting this happen, you need to get rid of them all. If you choose to have a TV, decide what is the most important. Some people will just spend some money on a nice gaming system. There are several that will allow you to play games, watch your favorite DVD's and allow you to stream some options like Netflix and Hulu. In the best case scenario, you should choose to just use a computer or other option that is cordless so you don't have to worry about tripping over all those extra cords in such a small place.

Decorating your living room is one of those spaces that can take a bit of time. You want to make sure that you are getting everything to fit in its proper place but you also don't want to take up more space than necessary. When you are ready to decorate and organize your tiny home, follow these easy suggestions to get started.

Chapter 5: Finding Storage for the Tiny Home

When it comes to finding the storage that you would like to use in your home, there are a lot of choices to help you out. Some people like to keep it simple and will throw all their items in a simple cardboard box. While this is one of the options that you can go with, it is often one that can make life difficult and your tiny home smaller. Instead, you need to use a bit of creativity and try out some new things in order to find the storage container that works the best for you. To get started, check out some of the tips in this chapter and you will see how easy, and fun, it can be to provide a lot of great storage to your tiny home.

Go with something strong and sturdy

No matter what kind of storage container you choose for your home, make sure that it is something strong and sturdy. For example, it usually is not the best idea to pick out some cardboard boxes to store all your items. To start with, these are bulky and not likely to fit under anything so it will look a bit strange having these boxes take up space in your tiny home. In addition, these boxes can easily get wet or damaged and you will likely lose all the information that you were storing inside.

It is better to find something that is a bit more durable. For example, plastic see through boxes can work out well for this kind of job. These come in a variety of sizes so with some measurements, you will be able to find one that works for your needs. You can also pick the colors, lid type, and so much more, making these a great option to keep everything safe in storage.

Use a lot of variety

There are a lot of options that you can choose when it comes to your storage. So don’t just

pick one kind of storage container in order to get all of your items picked up. This is boring and can make you feel like there is something missing in your tiny home. But if you pick out a variety of storage options, you will find that the home feels more comfy.

For example, instead of putting a whole bunch of book cases and putting them all around the home, consider having one or two book cases, some plastic boxes to put under the bed and furniture, some hanging options to use more vertical space, and even some nice baskets that you can hang on the wall. This helps to give you a lot of variety while still getting all of your items picked up.

Bookcases can work well

If you are able to fit a bookcase into your tiny home, this is a great way to store a lot of your extra items. From books to movies and so much more, a lot of things can go on a bookcase. There are many bookcase options that you can choose from. If possible, you may want to ask your contractor to put a few bookcases into the walls. This can help you to get more space in the room while still using the shelf as a storage unit.

Corner bookcases work out well too. These allow you almost twice as much space without taking up as much room throughout the home. Consider putting one of these into each corner in your home and you can really see a change in how much room is available. If nothing else, just having a regular bookcase to store all of your extra items can be a great bonus in your tiny home as well.

Only purchase if you already have a use in mind

No matter how great a storage container may look at the store, you should never purchase them unless you have a specific use in mind and will put it to use the moment you get home. It is easy to see something that looks cool and then assume that you will figure out a good use for this container later on. But in most cases, you will just purchase the item and never find the use that you intended. The container will just sit around in your home

and never get used.

Before you take home the container, you need to have an exact use in mind. If you can’t think of something for it within a few minutes, put the container back on the shelf and move on. This will prevent you from making a purchase that will just sit in the way in your tiny home.

Measure to get the right sizes

Often it is difficult to pick out the right size of storage containers if you are trying to do it without measurements. You may not know how high the bed goes up or how much room is free under the couch. And often, the process of trying to guess when you are at the store is going to end up with items that just don’t fit.

So, rather than getting containers that you can’t use, and you aren’t likely to take back to the store, take some measurements. Get out that pen and paper and right down the exact measurements of every space you plan to put a box. Whether it is in a closet, under the bed, under some furniture, or somewhere else, you need to get these measurements. Then, when you are at the store, you will no longer need to guess because you will already know the exact right size.

Use the walls

The walls can be great places to store things if you do it correctly. For example, bills and other important things that you need out of the way can be stored in some decorative baskets while still be out of the way. You can also use book cases and other options to use up the space that is just sitting there anyway.

Use your closets

If you have a closet, you should use it as much as possible. While it makes sense to hold your clothes and a few other necessities inside the closet, you can also use it for other storage needs. You can put a shelf on the top of the closet and put a few boxes of blankets or other items on the top. You can put some boxes on the floor part as well and hide them behind your clothes so they are out of the way. Using shoe holders that go over the door will also work to store a lot of great stuff out of the way that you will need later on.

Use any cabinets available

Any time you have some open cabinet space, you are wasting up the storage. Rather than letting all your items sit around the whole house, why not put some in your empty cabinets. While you probably won’t have all that much cabinet space, you can still use some of it to hold some random items. There are some great smaller plastic boxes that can hold all these extra items you find, perhaps lie cleaning supplies or some crafts. You can then snap the lid on top and push them to the back of the cabinet. Now they are out of the way until you are ready to use them again.

When you take the time to look around your tiny home, you will be amazed at how many spots you can use for storage. Some new tiny home owners will just look around the house and notice how small it looks. They may panic and figure that they will never be able to fit into a space this small. But if you use proper organization and use all the space that is available, you will find that your storage area is not as limited as you may have originally thought.

Chapter 6: Other Tips and Tricks You Can Use to Design, and Get the Most Out of, Your Tiny Home

Getting everything ready in your tiny home can take some time. You may not be used to how little space is available in the home and you can easily become worried that you won't be able to fit everything in. But take a deep breath. With a little bit of work and thinking the whole process through, you will find that it is possible to fit quite a bit of stuff into a tiny home. You just have to do it the right way.

If you are thinking about moving into a tiny home and need a bit more help with this process, take a look at these easy tips and see how easy it can be to take care of all your needs, even when you are low on space.

Find things that can have dual purposes

The more uses you can get out of one item, the more valuable it becomes in your tiny home, especially if you are able to find it in a smaller package. Every item you purchase should have as many possible uses. If nothing else, think about how likely you are to use that item in the immediate future. If you are just bringing the item along because it is pretty or you think it is cool, you are just wasting space. Only bring along the items that you really need and you can worry about the rest later.

Whenever possible, try to make each item capable of doing at least two different actions. You will be amazed at how much space this can free up in the tiny home and you won't miss out on anything. If you can find an item that is able to do three or four different things, you will save even more space.

Make lots of storage

The more storage you can make in your tiny home, the better off you will be. The tiny home isn’t going to have as much room as you are used to in your older home, but you will still want to bring in a lot of the same items that you are used to from your regular home. The best way to do this is to make as much storage in your new residence so everything can fit.

When looking for storage containers, you should make sure that they are durable. If you are storing anything under the bed or other furniture, make sure to pick out something that is sturdy and can take some beatings; plastic boxes from the store will often work well and help to prevent any moisture coming inside.

This is another place where you should find dual purposes for each item. Baskets on the wall can look really decorative, but then they can also work nicely for holding some of your favorite items inside. Keep a few to hold books and other random objects or make these into cupboards in your kitchen. Bookcases can also work well to do some decorating while still being able to hold a lot of items.

Go for tinier options

Just because you are in a smaller home doesn’t mean that you have to get rid of all your old luxuries. It just means that you need to concentrate and figure out better ways to get things done. For example, do you enjoy baking but worry that you won’t be able to make some of the items that you like in your tiny home? If baking is still important to you, consider purchasing a portable grill, or a tinier oven that can fit easily into the home without taking up as much space.

There are a lot of different options that you can use in your tiny home that are smaller and will fit much better. In most cases, using the items that would work for a camping trip can help out. These are often portable, can fit into a smaller space, and will even have more than one use at times; all of these are very important aspects when you are living in a tiny home.

Light colors

When it comes to decorating your tiny home, you should pick out light colors. When you pick out a dark color, you are going to make the home look much smaller. The darker the color, the harder it can be to feel like the room is big enough to fit all of your things in. While your room is going to be the same size no matter what color you make the room, but the way the eye perceives the colors will make all the difference.

If you want to make the room look a lot bigger, you need to paint with lighter colors. White can be great, but it is kind of boring so go for some other colors. Light blues, tans, and yellows can work nicely for this, but any color that is nice and light will help to open up the tiny home and helps you to keep the home from looking too small.

Go up rather than out

In a regular house, you can put things all over the floor and use up the space outwards as much as you would like. There is plenty of room in your regular home to do all of this stuff. But when you are in a tiny home, you are going to be short on outwards space. But if you go upwards, you will find there is just as much room in a tiny home as there is in your regular sized home.

So when you need to make some more room in the tiny home, you should start to go up. Shelves are great at helping out with this. Or you can get some baskets and put items in there as well. Hanging plants from the ceiling and having a garden in your home or working on baskets from the ceiling as well can work too. Get some creativity into the mix and you will see how easy it is to get more items into your tiny home in a smaller amount of space.

Use that wall space

The walls are going to be your best friend when it comes to your tiny home. In most homes, you will find that the walls are left alone. There isn’t a reason to put much on this space. But in a tiny home, you have to use up all the space you have in order to get all your things inside. So use up that wall space to make sure you can fit it all.

There are a lot of things that you can do with the walls. You can put up some shelves and put books and other items. You can find key chains or some other wall hangings that can work as more than one thing at a time. This can make the item more efficient in a small home. There are many ways that you can use the walls, but you should be creative and see how much you can fit into a small space.

Create openness in the home.

The more open your home becomes, the bigger it will feel. You should consider cutting out the walls when you are creating the floor plan. The fewer walls in your home, the more open your home will feel. If you are working with a contractor, they will be able to

provide you with some options that you need to determine the best open floor plan possible.

Another way to create openness is to let in as much light as possible. You can open up the windows and the doors if you are able. Pick out light curtains so the sun can get through and keep them clean so it doesn’t look crowded. Once the windows are open, you can work on creating openness in the rest of the house. You should make sure that the clutter is all out of the way; the more clutter all over the floor, the less room it looks like your home has. So make sure you keep the house cleaned up and it will look so much more open.

Lift up the furniture

In most homes, the furniture sits right on the floor. This is the way that most people enjoy it, but think of all the space that is being wasted with this idea. When the piece of furniture is on the floor, you aren’t able to put anything else in that location, making it very inefficient if you want to live in a tiny home.

Rather than letting this happen, you need to see where you are able to lift up the furniture. Even just a few inches can make a bit difference to your house layout. There are some nice lifters that you can purchase online and put under the bed, tables, chairs, and even the couch. Now you can place different storage containers under this, including some thin plastic boxes or some drawers and store anything you would like. This is going to open up your space while still bringing everything you need.

Find a good contractor to help design the home

Even when you are first putting the house together, you should consider what you want out of this home. Do you plan to fit as much of your old life inside as possible or are you willing to go to the bare necessities? Do you love to cook and want a little more space to go to the kitchen or would you like a bit more space in the living room to hold friends and family? Hiring a good contractor to help out with the design of your home can help you to get everything that you want out of this tiny home. Check out their references and sit down to talk to them about your goals and ideas before even started. If something doesn’t feel right, you can move on to another contractor until you find the right one.

Picking out a good contractor can take some time and it should not be a task that you run right in to. You should interview with a few different people and get a good look at how much they will cost and the type of work that they do. Get references and look up as much information on a person as possible. It is much better to pick the right one now rather than spending a ton of money and wasting it on someone who doesn’t have any idea of what they are doing.

If you would like to build the house yourself, this is also a possibility. You just need to take the time and go through all the right steps. Study up on all the legal codes for home building in your area and make sure that you get them all covered. Write up a blue print so you know exactly what you will be doing and shop around to find some of the best prices to save even more money. Building your own tiny home can be a fun experience and can save you money while giving you exactly what you want, but with all the regulations and things you have to keep in mind, most tiny home owners pass the work off to a contractor to save them time and to avoid making mistakes.

Living in a tiny home is something that can take some time to get used to. This is a lot less space than you are used to in your bigger home and figuring out how to design the area and get the most out of a little space can seem almost impossible. By following the tips in this guidebook, you will be able to get a ton of things into the small space and still get all the benefits of tiny home living.

Conclusion

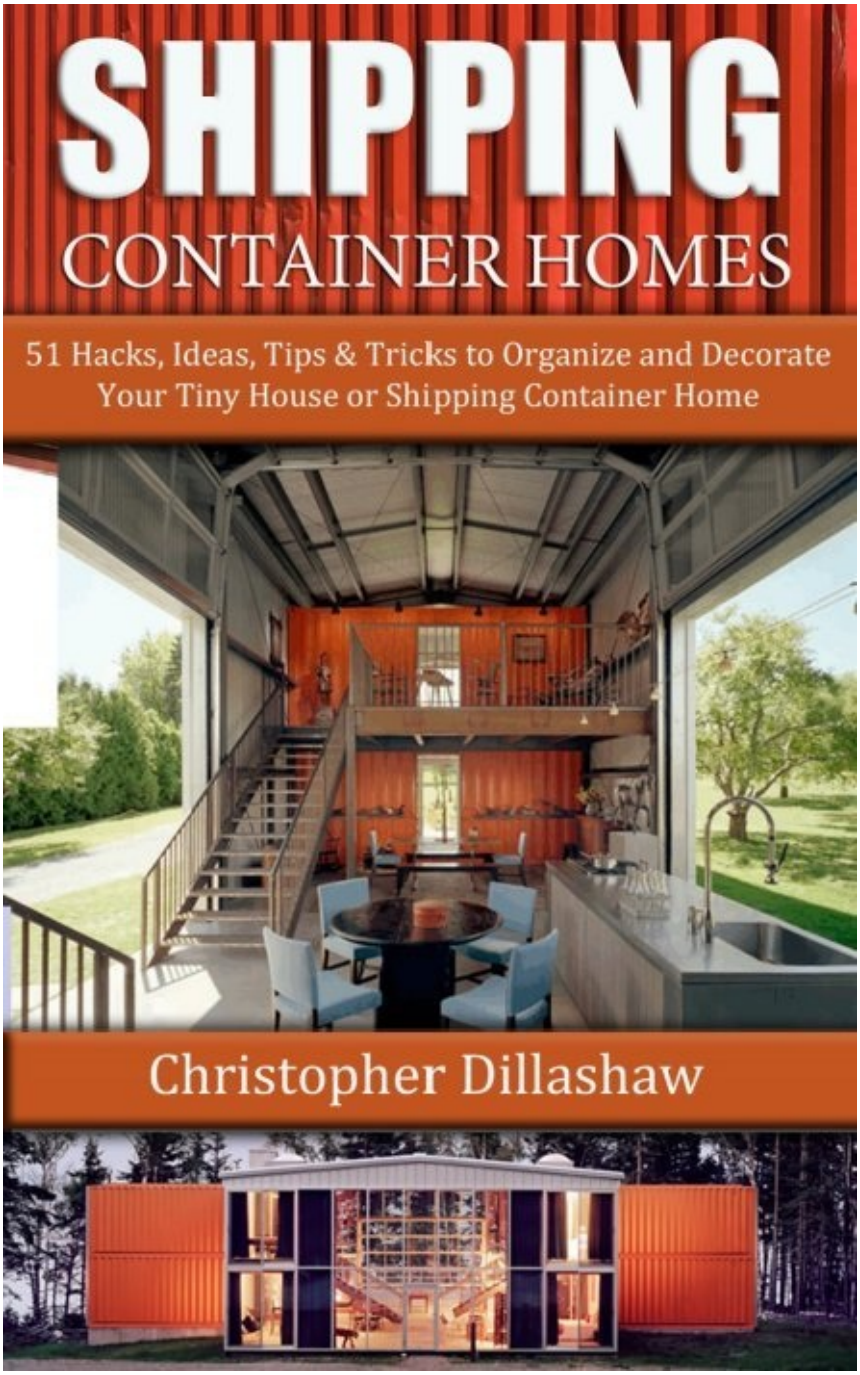
Decorating a tiny home can take a lot of time and effort. You want to bring in your own personal style and flair to the home, but you are worried that you will be too short on space to really see anything happen. This can scare a lot of people away from the idea of a tiny home because they don’t want to give up the ability to make this new home their own or to even have some of their modern luxuries.

In this guidebook, we spent some time looking over the various things that you can do in order to get the most out of the smallest spaces. No matter how tiny your new tiny home may be, you will be able to use some of the hints and tricks that are in this guidebook in order to see some amazing results. These tips are meant to help you to get as many of the necessities into your new tiny home as possible without crushing you in too much or making it feel overly crowded.

When you are ready to take on your tiny home and make it hold all the items that are the most important to you, while still having plenty of room to move around and have fun, make sure to check out this guidebook now. It is full of all the tips and tricks you need to get the very most out of your tiny home experience.

Shipping Container Homes

51 Ideas on How to Organize and Decorate Your Small Living Space



Introduction

If you are looking at this book then that means you are likely considering buying or building a shipping container home, or you already have one. There are two new experiences that are likely to come when you start decorating this home, one is having the complete freedom to what you want (possibly for the first time) and the second is coping with a small space that extends beyond just one smaller room in a house. A shipping container home can look surprisingly spacious from the outside and in pictures they seem to be endless. What these pictures often don’t tell you is that they are being taken from within the container and giving you a potentially false impression of how big they are, or they are likely several shipping containers and the typical shipping container house, possibly including yours, may not have that much space.

Once you’ve gotten a bathroom and a kitchen fitted you’ll find the rest of the space is quickly dwindling and you’ll almost certainly want separate space for your bedroom. What are you to do with your lounge, office or dining room now? If you’re not careful it might end up looking like a sales room or you’ll be in more of a storage container than a shipping one. Fortunately there are many ways to cleverly use your space so not only is there more room but you will also feel less constrained by a lack of space or a lack of privacy. If you are thoughtful and plan carefully there is no reason you can’t get all the functionality that you want out of your home and still have the look you want. After all, one of the unsung positives of a small space is that it is cheaper and easier to decorate and design. Shipping containers are also versatile enough that their small size if often easily gotten around and the best design choices usually come from restrictions.

This book goes over 51 fantastic tips and ideas for decorating your shipping container home. They may not all work for what you want, and you should never compromise your

vision or do something you feel uncomfortable with simply because it works for others, but you should be able to adapt much of this advice to your situation. The tips run the gamut of all the rooms that will be in your house and while you cannot do all of the tips in the same space, you can use nearly all of them at some point. Always remember to stick to your budget and to keep in mind the reality of what you are doing before buying anything.

1. Use Lots of Mini-Rooms

This tip is vital when you are decorating a smaller and narrow space that is still quite long. The idea is to not see the space as just one room where you must center everything on one function. You see this in most conventional living rooms where the coffee table or television becomes an altar and all the other items in the room service the use of the main piece. Instead you should see the space more like separate booths of a train carriage and instead of fitting a study and lounge into one huge room, you could corner off a lounge with a literal-corner couch and mount a television on the wall and then have a separate seating area for dinning and then a study further down with its own furniture.

2. Illusion of Space

The amount of space you have is more perception than anything because you are only ever taking up the space of your body. You could become claustrophobic in a mansion given enough shadows and yet a canal boat can feel infinite. One of the key tricks is to open space up as much as possible, either by making things as open plan or by creating the illusion of space. You can do this with long mirrors or windows (and in shipping containers you can make these windows very big) but there are other, less intuitive, considerations. Opting for small blinds instead of tent-like curtains or picking light wooden-frame furniture, with space underneath, instead of heavy and blocky couches will let you see more room, even if you can’t ever use it.

3. Multipurpose Furniture

This is going to be one of the really big space and style savers for your shipping container home. A dining table is really just a table and as long as you don’t require inbuilt stationary holders you can use it for lots of different functions without feeling like you are breaking the laws of design nature. There is a lot of cleverly designed furniture that can be folded up like a Rubik’s cube to turn a chair into a bed or ironing board and is useless at all three, but the best multipurpose pieces of furniture are ones where you change modes and the furniture stays the same. Something that can be used as both a couch and a bed with only a quick change of pillows is more ideal than a bed that has to be hidden in a wall.

4. Communal Purpose

In many homes there are far too many cupboards and they have no right to exist. A kitchen might have six different cupboards and two will be bursting with jars of peanut butter and the like and one will be near empty with only one or two pots in. No storage space should be needlessly designated as the storage space for that thing and that thing only. Most items are happy to live together with other items. Clean towels can live together with packets of printer paper. If you find you have two near-empty cupboards then simply make one full one and then take out the other one and putting something more useful there.

5. Build Your Storage In

A lot of your furniture is able to handle more storage capacity than it is already has – the question is, should it? And the answer is, why not? A couch can always have drawers placed in underneath or it can be built on top of them. As can a bed a lot of the time. The gap between a washing machine and the tabletop can become space for smaller trinkets either by stacking them or installing a handy pull-out drawer. If there is a lot of vertical space in a cupboard then it can have more shelves and if there is space underneath your clothes in wardrobe then you have room for shoe racks and storage boxes.

6. Rolling Furniture

One of the great shames of the modern era is that we still insist on furniture that stays in one place. If everything was built with wheels then moving house would be effortless and you could change the furniture around depending on your mood that day. There are lots of chairs and tables and even couches that come with wheels. For kitchens you can choose to buy a rolling island table with storage underneath which can be moved out of the way when you are entertaining or you just fancy having a dance around the place. Getting the balance between portability, function and design is difficult but certain items look particularly funky with wheels or they are not truly visible.

7. Pick Your Pattern

The patterns you pick for your home can have a big impact on how spacious the area feels and how high up the ceiling appears to dangle above you. If you have a space that could otherwise appeared cramped and stuffy then make sure to give it vibrant colors such as a vivid yellow or a lime green that really put out an energy or movement into the room which could otherwise feel constraining. Others things you might try are fun graphic prints on the furniture or using really big designs that distract from the room's shortcomings. You should of course play around and find what interests you (picking something you don't like for its psychological impact might not work long term) and make sure to avoid very dark colors or stripes that might end up looking like bars in a cell.

8. Build Around It

Often in shipping container homes you will have a few rooms that are quite spacious, if narrow, but you still only have those few rooms. A good strategy for making the most of this set-up is to have a feature that you can build around and it can serve a lot of different purposes – which is especially useful when, as in some container homes, you can’t as easily build things like seats or shelving into the walls. An example of this is a four sided shelf that acts a bit like a pillar in the centre of the room and each different side can act as the backdrop to the purpose of that area. One section might face the kitchen and carry plates and the other might face the study and be filled with books.

9. Leave it Open

In a bigger space you often try to hide away a lot of things by putting them away behind closet doors that are meant to blend into the wall or putting certain clothes away into drawers and the like. There are some practical advantages to doing this kind of thing because you might protect them from dust but you can just as easily hide them from use. One interesting strategy is to have all of your storage cupboards or shelves have open doors so that the contents become interesting focal points for the room and you in a smaller space, where you might retain a similar amount of possessions, you won’t feel like you are actually living in a storage container.

10. Distract Them with This

Having a focal point in a room is one of the great secrets of making small spaces seem not so small. No matter how cluttered you like to live or how minimal you might there is room to have a focal point in a room that will draw the eye to it and away from what little else there is that reminds people how small a space is. What you can have as a focal point will vary depending on the room – a big headstand will work well in a bedroom and a painting or television will work well in a lounge or kitchen. Another option is an accessory or color that will put attention to a bright pink pillow instead of what’s around it. The key is to present this item away from everything else so that it is just part of the background but instead pops out at you.

11. Keep it to Scale

This is some very sensible and simple advice that we often overlook but is something that must be kept in mind when designing. Everything has to fit in the space you have – you might be able to get a free four-seat couch from your Aunt but if that can touch two walls at any given time then it will almost certainly make the room around it shrink both physically in terms of the space you have left but also in terms of perception. Make sure that any piece of furniture you pick is going to fit tastefully into your home and if you struggle with juggling your needs with size don’t be afraid to get a few smaller pieces instead of one really large one.

12. Look Up

The typical shipping container will give you about eight feet of space above you to play with; this is similar to a lot of conventional homes and larger than some of the newer buildings which do not put the same stock in high ceilings. Shipping containers are also quite good at not filling up the space beneath you with too much padding so you have the option of living vertically as well. Having lots of smaller shelves that don’t jut out into your moving space are great as decorative aids – so you don’t have to hide away your mementos in a shoe box, but it also leaves more room beneath for you to give you and your furniture breathing space.

13. Clean That Up

One of the things you'll need to get used to in a small space is that you will need to clean up more; the previous small pile of clothes in the bedroom corner could become the clothes that are now your bedroom floor. To prevent this from happening too much you will need to avoid owning too much stuff that could get left out on tables or the floor but you can also design your home so that you don't have to clean up as much such as in built clothes hampers or storage space this will only allow you a minimal amount of things that can cause you are problem.

14. Have Less Clutter

Clutter is the enemy of small spaces because they just cannot live together and accommodate you as well. This means avoiding too many ornaments that could be in the way but also opting for walls that don’t have too many pictures or bulky decorations on and keeping the furniture down to what you need. There are ways to do this while still having pictures on the walls; you could choose to have a digital frame, you could create a collage instead of one large picture, you could use lots of smaller photographs on places like the fridge or by choosing to rotate a few pictures as the year goes by. The fewer items you closing in on you when you sit in a room the more room you will feel in their place.

15. Plan Ahead

One of the most important things you can do to make sure you use your space wisely is to plan out how you will decorate by sketching it out with an accurate floor plan. In your head you can sometimes allocate lots of space to a kitchen or an office or various other rooms and yet when you draw it up it turns out those places really only need a limited amount of space and some things such as the office or dining room can exist without their own special room. This planning will let you see how the colors might work together and will stop you from buying too much furniture before you've really thought how they will look in the room. One of the oddest mistakes people make is to buy furniture and then only see if it will fit once it has been delivered.

16. Customize it

If you are building a shipping container home it probably means you are hands on so you might consider building your own furniture or having it custom made or altered. The idea that you just buy a desk and then put it in any space you have doesn’t make that much sense. You don’t buy one-size-fits-all clothes and put them on any body size. The reason you can get rid of most of your office space is that you can build an office desk that could fit into one corner and there will be enough space for your needs but you won’t need a desk which could carry four desktop computers and enough files for a whole office.

17. Be Realistic

When you go into a home supply store you can get swept up in the display there and want to have it all in your own home – the two bedside lamps and the ottoman or the weird shaped drawers in a pyramid shape that get smaller as it goes higher. When you have limited space you should ask yourself, am I ever going to use this? Is it going to take up unnecessary space? If you find that you just don’t need something then be realistic and don’t install it in your home or take up space with things you do not need.

18. Color it in

The color you choose for you space is very important. We often think that a small space has to be white or we'll start suffocating but this isn't the case – paring different colors can mean that you could get away with a pink, brown and grey theme in one room but you do need to be careful to not choose anything too dark without anything to pick up the color. With a shipping container home there will only be really small space that can't take colors if you choose to build it that way. Another thing to think about is making your furniture fit in with the walls, a white couch in a white room will look smaller than if it were a bright red one but be careful to not make the room look like you have no sense of style.

19. Live For Yourself

Earlier the rule was to be realistic and part of that is not just deciding if you will use a piece of furniture but whether others will. You might have justified creating a spare room with its own bed and chair because you have guests every so often but when you have limited space you should always put yourself first unless you know you will have guests at least once a month. If you will not just have a normal amount of furniture or sleeping space – enough for you and your family and the extra numbers to make things symmetrical if it would look weird to have only three chairs at your table.

20. It All Looks Better Lit Up

It’s a general trend in design to have lots of lamps – maybe more than you really need but if you are clever these lamps can fit into your home without all needing their own table space. You can even have fun creating interesting look light fittings that give each room in the open plan has its own unique charm. What a lamp does is create ambience but it also creates a sense that what that lights up is its own unique space and can give smaller space a lot of variety. You might even consider using a few colored lamps to really amplify the impact of this.

21. Hook it Up

The more floor space you have for humans the better it is and one storage space that is not used as much as it should be is the humble hook. You might be limited in what you can put up on hooks without hanging items that don’t always hang but lots of things such as pans, spice jars, cups, kitchen utensils, towels and even electronics like headphones, can all be placed on hooks which makes them become an interest point to look at and remind you of their existence. The other bonus is that when hooked together something like a pan will fit much more economically with another pan that it will when stacked together.

22. Keep a Lid on it

Having floor space is great but sometimes you just won’t be able to use it and nothing else will be using the space – for example under a chair or table. This can become very easy and stylish storage without the need to build anything substantial. Using baskets or buckets to store things looks much friendlier and easier on the eyes than a big plastic storage unit and instead of building working doors a simple fabric curtain can be put around the underside of a table and become a great place for storing things. This is a very good strategy because once you start using this space to store things you no longer need to take up other valuable floor space with storage.

23. Love it or Leave it

If you’re moving your stuff across from an old home or deciding how to downsize then you should be ruthless. If you don’t love something then you can probably bin it without much heartache. The only question is whether it is of practical use. Try putting a marker next to something you are unsure of or some indication that will change if you use it, if you do not so much as look at that marker in a few weeks then bin it or sell it. Only keep it if you know it will be used again and it is expensive.

24. Curtain Call

Big heavy curtains are not often the answer to a small space’s needs but using a lighter material can really give a room an airy feel and bring in some color. They also allow enough light in that you won’t feel in a cave when they are drawn. Another cool use for curtains is to divide up a room instead of a wall. The curtains can be attached very simply and they are easily tucked away when you don’t need them. They allow for privacy but keep your space free.

25. Stairway to Storage

If you have a second floor to your shipping container home then the first step is to choose either a spiral staircase or even a simple ladder type set of stairs that will give you lots of space. If you do have a more conventional staircase it might naturally slant down and give you an arch which is open to having shelves or other storage put in or even building in a built in couch that can double as a bed for guests by simply adding a curtain in front to pull back when needed.

26. The Lowdown

Sometimes higher furniture can be good for small spaces because it gives the feeling of height and therefore space but this can be hard to pull off, especially if you don’t have other furniture that will match up well with it. You should primarily be on the lookout for low lying coffee tables and couches with low backs that won’t block out any natural light or wall space that they don’t need to. You might even consider a very low-lying bed which is excellent for its built-in storage and when you are say lower down everything above seems bigger.

27. Consider the Wall

If you have already built and insulated your home it might already be a step too late for you to start making decisions about how your actual walls will look in the end but depending on whether you insulated the inside or outside, or both, will give you more options. If you opted for a bare shipping container look inside then it will lend itself for a peeled back basic paint look and it may not be as well suited to having paintings stuck it which might help as restrictions often do when designing a place. Alternatively if you went for a more traditional inside insulation you can take advantage of hundreds of years of design history.

28. Wooden Beams

When building your home you most likely had to reinforce the container and you will have had to build a few rooms within the place which means you will probably have beams of some descriptions. If you are still in the pre-build stage then seriously consider choosing some old-style wooden beams when building or at least treating them with paint and a stressed look so they seem older. The wood will bring a very natural and calming feel to the space which can balance out some of the harshness that the modern looking shipping containers bring if left unchecked.

29. Home Sweet Patio

If you are building a shipping container home (or you have bought one) it is often very simple to add your own patio to the home which can add an incredibly amount of extra space without having any extra rooms. If you have large windows that lead out to this patio then your home will flow into it and it will be a natural extension of the living space you have. Decorating a patio is as simple as putting the bricks or wooden flooring down and putting some furniture out – you needn’t have anything too expensive or fancy just as long as it is waterproof or you create a small shelter for it.

30. Tailoring Your Toilet

The politics of where to place your toilet is intricate and would take many scholars thousands of years to come up with a definitive answer about its placement. This is especially true when you are relying on a more open plan style of living with a smaller space. The best solution would be to just put the lot outside and deal with walking out to your garden in just your towel each morning. A corner toilet will likely take up the last amount of room in your home but you will likely need to choose between having the convenience of having it near a bedroom or getting the most privacy for user by not placing it next to a lounge room.

31. Nautical Nonsense

The steel sides of your shipping container couples with the small space and the building’s seafaring history mean it lends itself very well to nautical themed furniture or that style of color or furniture. Consider having a bunk bed or porthole style window and using a nice mix of blue and white colors. The open space will also lend itself to the wonder that is hammocks which create a fun area to relax in and can also be folded up easily when you are not using them.

32. A Rooftop Garden

Depending on how you built the roof of your home it may be very simple for you to add a rooftop garden. If you went for a more traditional slate or wooden beam roof then you will not be able to do this but if you left it more natural then you need only place a small ladder and you will have access. Simply build a small gardening box (which benefits from a distance to lots of pests) and put in a few simple plants – consider growing your own vegetables or herbs. You can also place a small chair and table up there if you wish. The official story is that the sides of the container cannot take too much weight (it is the corners that bear most of it) but you likely won’t have to worry too much about a few plants. Ask your engineer when building if you need extra reinforcements to do this. One big plus is that a garden can help cool your container home quite quickly from watering and shade.

33. Shape Up

As a world we've leaned towards furniture that is decidedly boxy, there are many good reasons for this, we like straight lines, it's easy to think in squares and it's easy to build a square table. For a small space it is not always the best idea to have harsh and powerful shapes because of the feeling they can give but also just the space and difficulty of navigating them. You should consider more round furniture in a smaller home. It's easier to build around something that isn't just a square and it gives the space a softer and almost more vibrant feeling. Of course, you need to consider how furniture will press up against walls so maintain a balance between round furniture in the middle of the room and more rectangular pieces near the wall.

34. Getting it Cleared Up

This is a good tip for getting a sense of space and freedom in a room but it is also a bold design choice not for the faint-hearted. Clear furniture is for sale in many places from see-through tables and chairs to even electronics that let you see their wiry undergarments. Going all out with this kind of furniture is almost sure to be tacky but a few tasteful pieces can give you the functionality of the furniture without the weight of their presence. Clear furniture is great for minimal, modern or Asian inspired designs and can look spectacular when you stand at one end of your shipping container and get see through to the other. Be wary of cheaper pieces though as they can look very cheap.

35. Vintage Contrasts

Although shipping containers have been used for many years as back-up storage they have come to favor as abodes in the modern age thanks to their minimal and industrial look. When decorating you should keep this in mind and play to its strengths but there is also room to play with this by putting in a few antique or vintage pieces of furniture or decorations. Something regal and earthy will be a real winner in this environment and will pop out from its environment. Don’t just stick in any antique you’ve found but a piece that fits in and you enjoy will look great especially if you adapt it to keep in with the recycled them a shipping container brings.

36. Bringing it to Life

If you’re not careful with a small space it can say confined or imprisoned or caged. A good way to transform the space is to put something living in it – this means plants and water features. You of course don’t want clutter or too much moisture in a space that could already prove to get too damp if not properly maintained. But a small waterfall type feature will not take up to much space but it will feel tranquil and cool and freeing. Plants not only give the feeling of having more oxygen to breath but actually can clean the air around you – you want to choose some delicate plants that can be easily hung and in a small space a fragrant plant can really spice up things with its scent.

37. The Rug From Under

Rugs are a contentious design choice for small spaces. A big wooly one might make the space seem too cluttered and full, and one with aggressive patterns might draw too much attention to the fact it’s taking up a lot of the limited space. If it looks old it could feel dusty in the room. Rugs, however, are also fantastic for giving an illusion of more space when they are inoffensive because they frame the floor well and it feels homely. If you are going for a more open-plan buildings rugs are very good at making each section feel more like its own room with its own character where you might like to stop for a bit.

38. So Cute

While trying to free up as much space as possible and given a feeling of openness and airiness is a must don’t forget what that your shipping container home is also pretty adorable. One option is to fully embrace this and use designs and furniture that is fun or small enough to fit to the scale of the home you live in. You might like to use cartoon style designs or even go for an almost childish theme. A lot can be forgiven if what you have inside is endearing and makes people feel happy. Don’t lose character in a effort to be too vogue or sensible.

39. Emerging From the Shadows

A powerful design technique often used in smaller spaces is to go from a dark hallway or room into the smaller room that is full of light colors and airy fixtures. The contrast of the two makes the latter seem much bigger and the dark areas can usually stand the hit of darker colors. In a lot of shipping containers spaces this might not be all the useful since you may not have lots of rooms of varying sizes. You could use it in a bedroom or bathroom if they are separated off. What you can do is use lighter colors for some sections, say for example the lounge, and then contrast that with slightly darker spaces which don’t need the same feel of space.

40. Front and Centre

It’s intuitive to think that if you want more space that you should push everything as close to the walls as you can and then have as much space as possible in the middle of your home to run around in. An element of this thinking is correct, you do want as much space possible, but it can also be deceptive because the space can start to become cold and isolated. Space is important but the feeling of comfort and freedom is more important. Often centering your furniture will create a warmer atmosphere than if you had more actual space. Physical space and the space you use is not always the same thing and you can use this to your advantage.

41. Unencumbered and Free

When designing to be space conscious we can be too clever and end up with furniture we need to keep folding away or we have a chest as a coffee table and you need to remove all your magazines and coasters every time you want to get something out of it. It’s not always bad to have to do these things but you don’t always want to take 3 minutes what should have taken seconds. Things that should always be easy to do are using your bathroom and moving around the kitchen. You don’t want to make it difficult to access anything important like a sink and you never want to bang your legs on low-lying furniture.

42. The Stars Above

A shipping container can be a very interesting building and design to look at, so don’t be afraid to point people in the direction of the ceiling. There are a few ways to do this but some of the really simple ones are to have a light fitting the dangles down and has a lampshade that really attracts attention. The headboard for a bed can be large and reach up to the roof. You can also simply place some pictures higher up so that you are drawn to the space in the room and you feel the whole thing is bigger.

43. Hiding in Plain Sight

You will need to juggle storage, space and utility when trying to figure out how to spruce up your home. Hiding what you can is good but sometimes you just need a wardrobe or a set of drawers and you can’t make it invisible. Do the opposite and invest or create some furniture that is really wild – you could repurpose some old containers to make a hodge-podge of drawers and paint them in vibrant colors. You can have a distorted bizarre shaped wardrobe. The key is that people won’t be thinking ‘why is their wardrobe here?’ but ‘What a fantastic looking object!’

44. Just Plain Hide it

There are a lot of ways to hide furniture and items so they don’t seem imposing. You can build or buy fold up tables that will attach to the wall and when folded up will look like a painting or interesting picture. You can also use mirror cabinets or clocks which open out into little cupboards. Often you can just buy ready built foldaway furniture and put your own design on it with ease to create this effect.

45. Long-legged

We’ve already discussed the need for height and volume to create an illusion of space and also the need to make furniture seem less present. Another way of achieving this is to have furniture – lamps, tables and chairs can all have very spindly and long legs. They will give a feeling of delicacy and quaintness and draw the eyes to them when entering the room. They will also just be very fashionable furniture pieces to have in your home. The key is to make sure nothing becomes inaccessible or impractical – you don’t want a low down coffee table and some stools that touch the ceiling.

46. Lay it on

Layers are very tricky to get right and in a small space they can risk choking you up and putting all kinds of hazards as you get up from your low couch and walk into a hammock. If you can pull these off you will give a room interesting texture and a feeling of movement and harmony. A shipping container lends itself quite well to layers if you have opted for a larger one so consider how you could have things up high and lower that complement each other and then have pieces that run through the both such as a shelf or even a magazine rack.

47. Industrial Sounds

Your shipping container house as an industrial past and you shouldn’t run away from this, you can really do amazing things if you pick a metal theme for some of the sections of your house to complement the surrounding walls and structure. You don’t want the building to appear drab and depressing but a concrete look can also have an urban and exciting feel if you treat it properly, you might even consider a street art look on some of your walls. You can repurpose old metal bunches or a fire-escape if you are using stairs.

48. Three-in-one

While open plan will work the best for a lot of these spaces you might also like to play with some separate rooms. Consider having one or two ends where you place a small room that you might even divide into three separate rooms about the size of a booth at a diner. You can use the lessons here for small spaces and have three unique rooms that will be interesting to explore and add a sense of variety that can be lost in a larger room. You might also be able to have a space for privacy or quiet that might otherwise be lost.

49. What a View

It’s popular for many shipping container homes to have lots of full-length windows to take in the world around them and allow you to breathe in. A good design tip is to use this view to make up the central point of a room. Instead of a television or a closed circle of couches you can instead just look out to the window as though you are in conversation with it. The sun could warm up the place too much even with good curtains or blinds so it might be a good idea to place a few trees for shade, especially in areas where you might set up a couch to look out to nature.

50. Barriers

The different clusters of furniture and storage devices that will make up the different rooms or living spaces can sometimes make you feel like you are just in one room. Which you are but there’s just a technicality, however, you can bring back some of the distance and security a wall creates but putting a few covert walls in. If you have a small dining area in one place and a lounge in another then put a double sided book self or television stand in-between them that are a bit wider or longer than you might otherwise have used. This will mean you aren’t always looking at every element of the house while are sat down but you won’t feel that walls are encroaching on your space all of the time you are in here.

51. Outside-In

One of the best uses for your shipping container home is to play with the outside and the in and create new environments that way. We tend to walk around a house and avoid going outside unless we need to but if you build an L-shaped home then suddenly you have created a little courtyard which can be accessed with glass screen doors. If you make this space usable and comfortable then you will see it as a natural extension of your living space and something you go into regularly and not just on a special treat or when you are having friends over.

Conclusion

You should now have a good idea of what you want to do with your home and understand some of the basic principles of building around a small space. The key is to take from these only the things that you like and to adapt or ignore what you do not. If you dream of having enormous couches and want to cover your walls with paintings, and your special things, then there is room to do that but don’t forget some of the basic design principles, that neutral or bright colors will work best for smaller spaces and having small things higher up will use the most of your space. Remember also that saving space may not be as desirable as feeling comfortable. How you feel and what is there are not always the same thing. So be clever and be considerate and enjoy your new home.

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