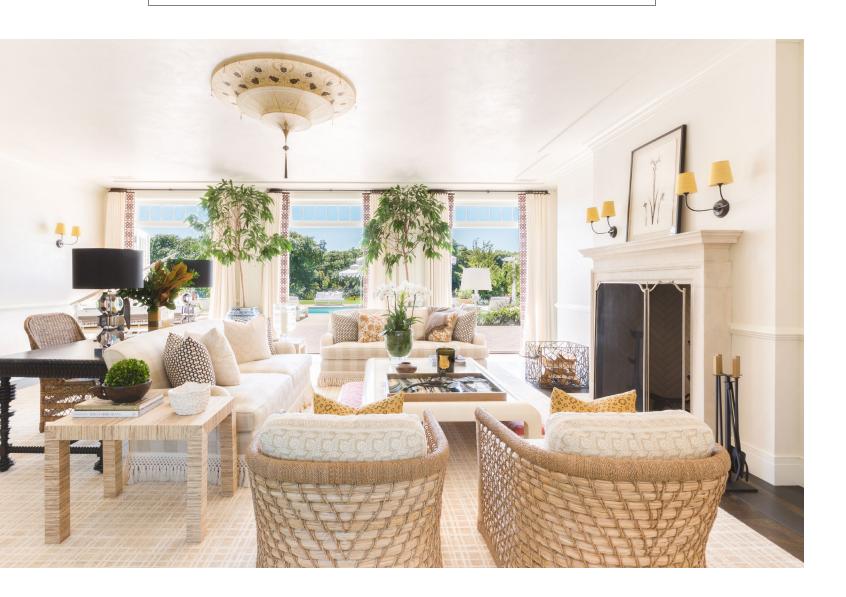# SBLS

Santa Barbara Life & Style Magazine

LEAVE IT TO US

Designing
BLISS

EXPERT ADVICE FROM TAYLOR BLISS, A LOCAL DESIGNER
WHO'S RENOVATING HER SPANISH REVIVAL HOME

"Skip the rush to finish
your project and *take
time to really live in
your house.* Then, over
time, you'll accumulate
purposeful pieces you can
add to your walls."

by *KARA THOMPSON*
Photos by *ALYSSA ROSENHECK*
Design by *TAYLOR ANNE INTERIORS*

W hether big or small, beachfront or tucked away, new or filled with character, our homes offer us a blank canvas to express our personalities. They create a space for us to grow and feel inspired while simultaneously making us feel cozy and safe.

When I moved into a new apartment in March, I saw it as an opportunity to design a space that made me feel entirely myself. It was a fresh start—a place I could not only unwind but one that would showcase my personality and all that's important to me. I've been home decor obsessed ever since I can remember, however, designing your own abode can be somewhat intimidating.

"Because there's so much out there, it can be hard to pinpoint your exact style," says Taylor Bliss, founder of Taylor Anne Interiors, an interior architecture and design firm. Whether you're revamping a single room or building from the ground up, here are eight ways the Santa-Barbara based design star thinks you can streamline your process and end up with results that make your house truly feel like home.

1. Look in your closet.

There are a lot of resources that can help you curate your home, but what Bliss finds helpful with her clients is to look at what's inside their closets. "Generally speaking, what people look good in, they feel good in," she explains. You can replicate her process by taking a peek in your wardrobe. Take note of whether you wear a lot of white or if you gravitate toward brighter colors. It's also helpful to pick up on patterns or fabrics that you're drawn to. Bliss believes that what you like to wear day to day can easily translate to your home and will allow you to feel good in your space.

2. Pull inspiration from print.

Another way to get ideas flowing is to pull a variety of images from all spectrums of design—think modern, transitional, and neutral. Circle things you like, whether it's a light fixture, wall art, or even specific colors. "After you've gone through a handful of images, you'll likely see a pattern that continues to come up," Bliss explains.

There's also something to be said about taking things offline. Rather than spending hours pinning images on Pinterest (which, let's be real, will get buried and lost), consider printing photos or flipping through a catalog. The tangibility of holding and looking at an image will give you a more life-like experience. Plus, you can make "love" and "hate" piles to further nail down your style.

3. Consider the mood.

One often forgotten yet crucial element to consider when designing a room is the mood it exudes. "Color and design gives people such an emotional response and it can greatly affect your mood, so it's important to think about that when choosing colors for your home," Bliss says. The spaces we spend time in also have an impact on things like productivity, creativity, and stress levels. "If you want something more uplifting, look into the use of brighter hues. If you want a feeling that is more calming and spa-like, think about pulling natural colors and textures."

4. Keep these key elements in mind.

When I was trying to define the direction I was heading with my apartment, I often lost sight of the key elements that should be considered. To keep yourself on track, Bliss feels it's helpful to prioritize the color, texture, shape, balance, lighting, and layering in each room.

Spend some time going through each of these elements and asking yourself questions like: Where will my source of light come from? How can I incorporate different shapes within the room? What color combinations can I play around with? These practices will help you hone in on your design goals and achieve a well balanced, thoughtful environment.

5. Don't discount texture.

Have you ever walked into a room and felt that it fell flat? It's likely because there wasn't much texture or layering in the space. These two seemingly small details can majorly elevate an otherwise ordinary room. A few ways you can accomplish texture in a room include adding wallpaper, rugs, drapery, and even different types of lighting (which creates visual texture). "The use of mixed materials is super important. You want to work your way around a room and add texture wherever possible," Bliss explains.

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6. Mix your price points.

Redesigns often come with big investments, but Bliss believes that mixing high and low price points can create beautiful harmony in a room. "Not everything has to be super expensive. It's actually better if it's not because it makes a space feel more approachable and comfortable," she adds. Try sourcing antique pieces, like a unique chair that inspires you or art that reminds you of your favorite destination. Save the splurging for bigger items that require higher quality, like furniture or rugs.

7. Source thoughtfully.

Accessorizing makes a big difference and can add a lot of character to a home, however, Bliss feels that these finishing touches should be curated with meaning. Try not to go overboard with mundane items like candles, vases, or picture frames, and instead focus on sourcing pieces that mean something to you. "If you have a coffee table book in your living room, be sure it's one you actually like and want to read." Otherwise, these little knick knacks pile up over time and can make us feel less connected to our space.

"It's fun to go out and shop and see what you can find, but reach for things that you're actually drawn to. Don't just fill your space with stuff that doesn't mean anything to you," she elaborates. "At that point, it's not going to add anything, it's just sort of existing."

8. Don't be afraid of negative space.

One rookie mistake that's often made when designing a room: cramming every inch of the walls with decorative accents. "There's definite power in negative space," Bliss says. It offers up breathing room and gives your eyes a place to rest. If you're overwhelmed visually (by too many photos or mirrors on a wall, for example), it can detract from the pieces you do have hanging.

"Leaving something empty gives you room to grow into your space—you don't have to fill it all at once." Skip the rush to finish your project and take time to really live in your house. Then, over time, you'll accumulate purposeful pieces you can add to your walls. ∗