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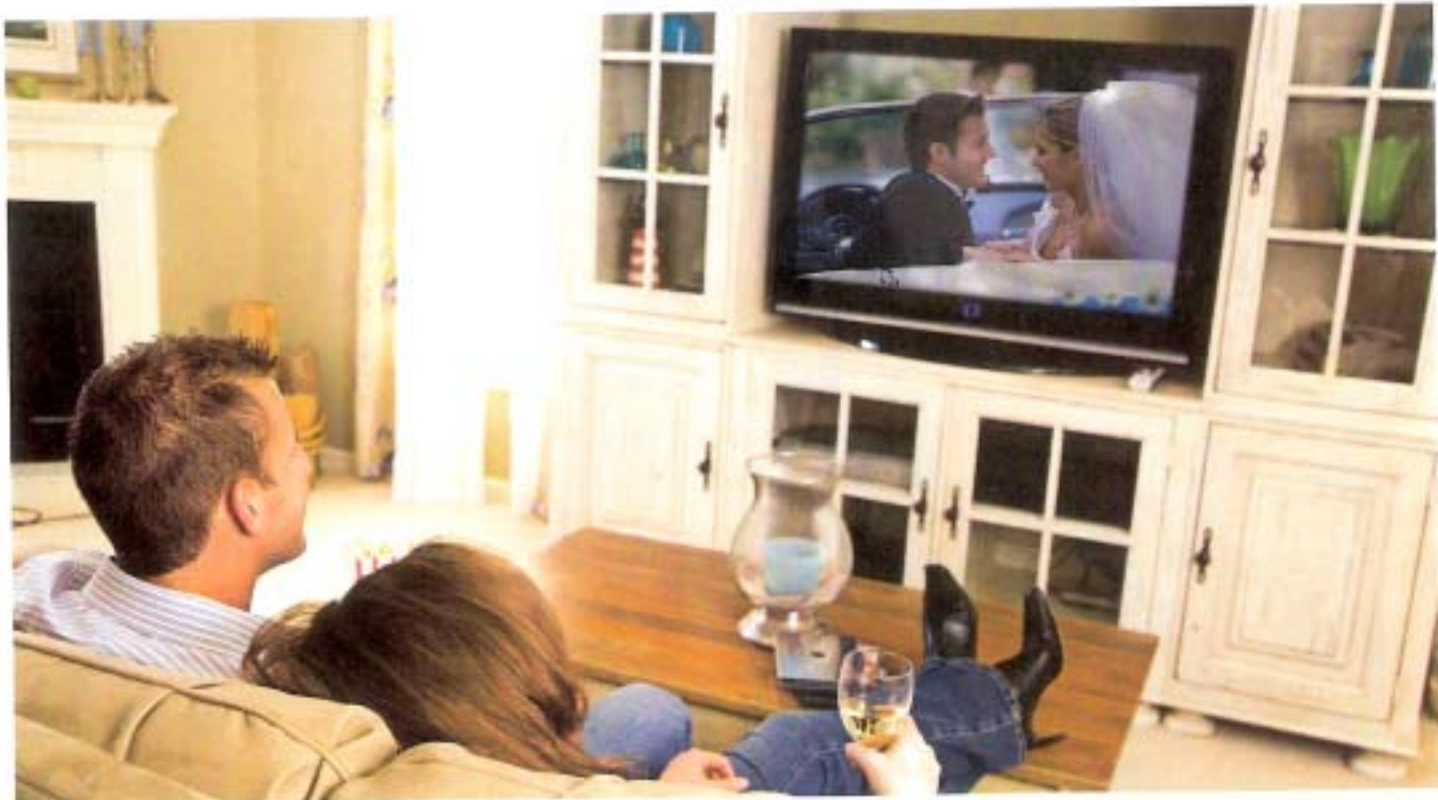
your new home

stylish *home entertainment*

Insider tips on making the entertainment room the most popular spot in your house.

Written by CELIA SHATZMAN

He wants a state-of-the-art home movie theater, but you'll settle for just a nice stereo and television in the den – no matter what style you decide on, creating a home entertainment system is exciting for every newlywed couple.





The first thing to consider when planning your home entertainment system is your space. "The size of television you choose should be determined by the size of the room you're putting it in," said Kenneth Brown, designer and host of HGTV's *reDesign*. Work with the room you have - if you have a small living room, don't buy a huge wide-screen TV. "It's okay to have a small viewing room, it may be all you need," says Brown. "Just scale everything to fit."

Your budget should be considered next. "Work out how much you want to spend, and then prioritize," says Brown. Decide on what you need and want, and what you're willing to sacrifice. Do you really need that 200 CD/DVD disc changer or will you be just as happy with a quality DVD

player? Consider what the overall goal is for your room, and then purchase everything in phases. "Most people don't buy everything all at once," says Brown. Purchase the fundamentals first, like the TV and DVD player. You can add the speakers and other accessories over time. But if you are planning to build your system slowly, make sure you learn what your TV is compatible with, such as satellite cable or special speakers. "So, then it's just a matter of plugging in a wire and adding a couple of components when you're ready," says Brown.

Invest in good electronics, but try to buy them when they are on sale. Remote controls are great add-ons, especially universal remotes. If you have a generous budget, a cool luxury is hav-

ing a remote control that operates all of the lighting in the room.

New innovative audio and visual systems are attractive enough to take center stage in your room, and high tech style can be found in everything from sleek projectors and flat-screen plasma TVs to wireless speakers and high definition digital radios. Look through interior design magazines and on www.hgtv.com for the latest stylish technology for home entertainment.

While the focus is on entertainment, it is also important for the room to look polished. A simple way to make everything look sleek is by hiding wires. "I'm very big on hiding cords," said June Saruwatari, organizing expert and founder of *The Organizing Maniac*.

"Because they can take on a life of their own, it's a good idea to label all of the wires whenever you get a new piece of equipment. It makes it easy when you need to move it." This will allow both you and your husband to know which cord goes with what, especially if you have 10 different items plugged into one surge protector. Another clever way to organize the electronics' cords is by drilling a hole in the back of your shelving unit, gathering all the cords in a big binder clip, and then pulling the cords through the hole. This will neatly group all of the cords together where you can then use a cord organizer to keep them in place.

Try to look for furniture that has wire management systems built into it. "It might be one of the bigger expenses, but it's worth it to hide wiring because it gives the room a more finished look," says Brown. You can also try running the wires under an area rug or wall molding.

One of the biggest debates newlywed couples have is furnishing the entertainment room. "Typically, the husband wants a nice comfortable chair for himself to watch the game, while the wife likes to curl up on the sofa next to her man," says Brown. Men and women use the room differently. "It all comes down to how they like watching television."

The sofa is usually the centerpiece of the room. Brown prefers a 42-inch sofa as opposed to the standard 36-inch because they're roomier. Choose one made of a durable fabric, especially

since you'll be eating and drinking on it often. A heavy-duty cotton blended with polyester or other type of man-made material is best. If you're on a budget, you can have great custom slipcovers made. "It's a great way to dress up an old sofa if you don't want to break the bank," says Brown.

Then, add in a few comfortable swivel chairs to the décor - they make it easy to turn and view the screen. "Also get a lot of big throw pillows," says Brown. "They're great for snuggling together on the floor, as well as providing extra seating for guests."

Wherever you're sitting in the room you should have access to a table. Whether it's a side or a coffee table, you need somewhere to put the remote or bowl of chips. If you prefer wood tables, try to choose one with a glass top so the wood is protected and there's no need to worry about coasters.

Consider the acoustics while decorating your entertainment room. If your room has hardwood floors the sounds will echo, but you can add carpeting, an area rug, or window drapes to help soften the surfaces and absorb sound. You don't have to go all out with the carpeting for this room, Brown recommends shopping for remnants at a carpet store. You usually can find great selections at good prices in their remnant department.

If you don't have shelving units, Saruwatari recommends using storage benches. "Not only do they provide extra storage space and seating, they also look chic. Use them to hold DVDs, CDs, and even non-perishable snacks."

Saruwatari believes organization is the key to simplifying your home entertainment room. "It's all about having everything at your fingertips." The "homes" you create for your accessories are determined by how much space you have. Find a place to house all of your equipment in one area, including DVDs and CDs. Look for furniture that has built-in drawers, or if you are tight on space you can purchase DVD and CD albums for storage. Organizing your DVDs and CDs by genre or alphabetically is helpful, and having separate containers can simplify organization. Everything should have its place, and you can put accessories, such as remote controls, batteries, warranties, and manuals in baskets. "It's important to find containers that are aesthetically pleasing, as well as functional and practical," says Saruwatari. "So, when you open the cabinet or drawer or even if it's sitting on the shelf, it looks good."

Another great way to organize your music is a MP3 player. You can create playlists according to how you listen to music and you can store the songs on your computer's hard drive.

Also consider adding a mini fridge in the room. "It's a very cool idea," says Saruwatari. "It's fun to have snacks and drinks in your media center, and this way you'll always be ready for a party."

Remember that the focus of organizing and furnishing your home entertainment room is creating an entertaining space that will be comfortable and fun for the both of you, as well as your guests.