

@ HOME with Winona

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Taking the edge off the formal living room: how to make it comfortable and luxurious

There's no need to drain one's bank account or energy reserves to create a living room that provides the kind of livable luxury we could all use. Louis XVI formality and total matching looks are a thing of the past for most of us. The luxury living room of today is a place we can enjoy the peace and quiet first and foremost. It's also a room that says something about what's important to us. We showcase items we care about there, whether inherited from a favorite grandparent, purchased with a loved one or collected on a recent trip or visit to a local fair.

Sue Rainville, Director of Marketing for Hunter Douglas Canada, offers the following tips to make your special room comfortable and luxurious:

Mapping it out and choosing the furniture

Decide what artwork, crafts or special furnishings you want to display. Arrange the major furniture pieces to encourage conversation and relaxation and to highlight your treasures – remembering they should be protected from high-traffic areas. Remember too, no matter where you are seated, you need a place to put a glass, plate or cup of coffee within 15 or 18 inches. As a general rule, the coffee table should be two-thirds the size of your sofa. Whatever your style, take your time when choosing the upholstery. Whether plush, satiny, tailored or anything in-between, make sure the fabrics are durable.

Window treatments and lighting

Do yourself a favor, and keep them simple and uncluttered, but effective. Choose products that modulate and soften the light, but still let you enjoy it. Light is a luxury in and of itself when properly managed. Alustra Duette honeycomb shades from Hunter Douglas have two fabric layers that diffuse the light and eliminate harsh shadows and glare for a truly restful ambience. They also come in fabrics that add organic texture at the window. Their honeycomb structure traps air and helps to lower heating and cooling bills.

With the right window treatments making the most of the natural light, you don't need harsh overhead lighting. Floor and table lamps provide a more intimate setting.



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Carpets

Carpets can often set the style for a room. With the proper choice, a room can go from under-decorated to looking just right. A fine French carpet with graceful flowing lines and ornamentation or an Oriental or tribal rug with handmade detail can add distinction. Whatever your style, don't skimp on the size. Your main furniture pieces should fit within the confines of your carpet; if not your room is only going to look small. Experiment with the shape if you want the carpet to stand out.



Decide what artwork, crafts or special furnishings you want to display.

Plants

An inexpensive accent in any room that adds another dose of Mother Nature in addition to the natural light is plants. As for height and size, try alternating plants at varying heights to add interest to a space. Porcelain or metallic plant holders bring distinction as well.

With these tips, making your special space comfortable and luxurious, should be easier than ever.

New research shows these five driving habits will save you money on fuel

Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) has compiled some compelling data on why we should adopt safer, greener driving habits. The latest statistics are very telling and point to a whole new mindset in the way we drive. Studies show that these five driving techniques can reduce your fuel costs by up to 25 per cent:

- Accelerate gently;
- Maintain a steady speed;
- Avoid high speeds;
- Anticipate traffic;
- Coast to decelerate.



Studies show that these five driving techniques can reduce your fuel costs by up to 25 %.

You should still combine errands, monitor your fuel consumption, reduce idling, maintain proper tire inflation and vehicle maintenance, cut back on air conditioning use and lighten your load; however, these five driving techniques will definitely put your wallet and the environment in the green.