

Time-saving tips to outfit your new home

By Karen Cooksey
Copley News Service

The first home you share as newlyweds is a very special place — it has a fresh, uncluttered feel, not yet weighted down with years of accumulation. But being a just-married couple, you probably haven't yet accumulated cash reserves, either.

You'll need to acquaint yourself with the basics in lighting, painting, floor and window treatments, furniture refinishing and those finishing touches that make a house a home — without a heavy price tag.

In addition, you'll want to learn practical tricks to optimize your space, use optical illusions to your advantage, create moods with colors, spruce up a home with plants and decorate for easy maintenance. Do it yourselves, together, and create a home you'll be proud to call "ours."

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Where do you start when furnishing a home on a shoestring? Experts say to begin with the place you'll spend one-third of your day — the bedroom.

In theory, you should buy a good-quality bed that's as big as you need, but if you're starting out in postage stamp-size quarters, a double bed or a hideaway may have to do for a few years.

Decorator Sharyn Fireman, ASID, says no matter what size the space, make sure the bedroom is "done."

"Paint it, drape it and put a beautiful spread on the bed," says the Boston designer. "It's where you'll retire after dinner, so you'll want it to be as romantic and serene as possible."

A sofa is another important first purchase. A quality piece that will last for years runs between \$500 and \$1,000. But if the budget is tight, buy the economy model with the idea that you'll discard it in a few years.

Neilson Anderson, a fine arts appraiser and estate sales agent in Los Angeles, offers the following checklist to help you find that special treasure:

- Prepare a specific "want list."
- Write down what pieces of furniture you need and where you will put them. Take along necessary measurements — the room size, door and window sizes and space allotted.
- Compare the prices of items you find to prices of similar pieces in current furniture catalogs. If you can buy the used piece in good condition for less than half the price of a new one, it's a good buy.
- Examine the item carefully. Is it structurally sound? Is the joint-

ery substantially constructed? Is it stapled or spot-glued? Can it withstand refinishing?

- Notice how much carving, fluting, spindling and handwork went into the construction. The more work, the more valuable the piece.
- Determine whether the piece is scaled properly for your needs. Older homes were designed on a larger scale with 10-foot ceilings, big windows and furniture to match, but those same larger pieces may overpower the rest of your furniture.
- Examine the frame if you're contemplating buying a couch or sofa. Wood frames from the Victorian era were typically well-crafted, solidly built of hardwood and

A MARRIAGE OF TASTES

When you love a country look and he loves contemporary, how

worth the expense to reupholster. Check to see if the cushions are rocking and then determine if the frame is worth salvaging.

- Be sure about the piece before you buy it. At many sales, you may only have one opportunity to place a bid or purchase a piece you like and there is rarely a return policy.
- Arrange a way to transport your new furniture home safely. Keep an old blanket handy to avoid chipping, scratching or cracking your new treasure.

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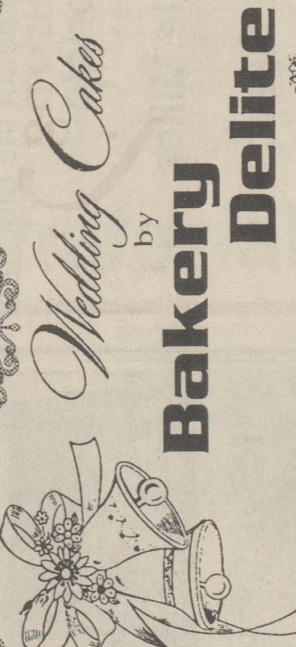
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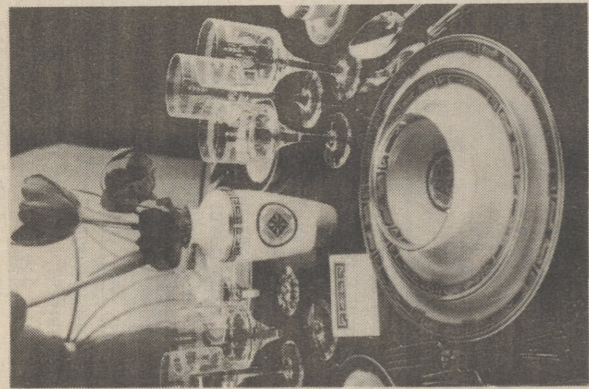
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Choose gifts that reflect your special style

The consultant attempts to get an idea of the tastes and needs of the bride and groom and recommends gifts that will be right for them. Managers and clerks in specialty stores that do not have bridal consultants offer excellent knowledge about items in the store.



Centuries ago in Europe, it was customary for village neighbors to outfit a newlywed home. Today the responsibility has been passed on to family, friends and co-workers.

In the past, choosing gifts was relatively simple; the couple had nothing and needed everything. The changing demographics of the bridal scene have had an impact on gift-giving and have made the gift registry a necessity.

Stores have forms that make registering easy. Simply fill in the blanks with brands, patterns, size and colors of desired items. The consultant enters the information into a computer, and guests are able to get copies of the registry at any store in the chain. Gifts purchased are eliminated from the computer.

WHAT TO CHOOSE

There are three rules to follow when deciding what to register for. First, be practical. There is no rule of etiquette stating "Thou shalt register for fine china, silver and crystal." If you will not have a need for a formal table, don't register for these items.

Second, be sure to register for a variety of gifts in a wide price range to offer your guests the best selection possible. Don't be afraid to place expensive gifts on the list, but alternately, don't exclude the less expensive items.

Third, register for what you want, because that will be what you get. Your wedding is one of the few times in your life you get to create a wish list.

Nothing is taboo. Today's bride, with an average age of 24, is older than any previ-

ous generation, and second marriages are on the rise. Remarriages comprise almost one-third of all weddings. Because of the changing demographics, many couples already have the basics — everyday dishes, cookware and household appliances. This is their chance to get what they are missing or to upgrade to higher quality, upscale items.

According to a recent study reported in *Home World Business*, 75 percent of all brides registering do so with their fiancés. Consider items such as camping gear, power tools and electronic gadgets, which are popping up or registries more often.

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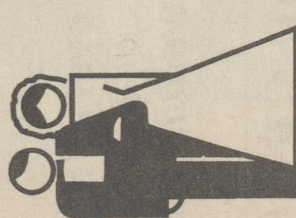
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