

Creating fun - and safe - spaces for children

By Allison Ashton
Copley News Service

Expectant parents might envision the ideal nursery as a fantasy place, complete with an antique cradle, lace curtains and Amish quilts.

But whose design needs does a room like that serve? As Mary Gilliat points out in "Designing Rooms for Children" (Little, Brown), that kind of nursery might be a parent's dream, but it won't do much for the child.

Instead, the ideal nursery is a functional room, a stimulating place where children can sleep, play, sit, read, draw and store all their stuff. Even a room for a newborn can be designed to grow with the type.

Gilliat is a staunch advocate of function rather than making trendy design statements, and she insists that the same basic room that serves a baby can be adapted to suit a teenager. Smart new parents look ahead. Instead of blowing decorating dollars on a fancy crib, they invest in a sturdy wardrobe and drawers (not baby-size ones, either).

Take, for example, a nursery that includes a sleeping cot, wardrobe with cupboards, bookshelves, a counter with two sets of drawers and a trolley for baby things. For a toddler, the cot is replaced by a bed with a safety rail, and the trolley now holds toys.

Once the child is in school, parents might add bunk beds, and the trolley holds a computer or books; the counter that served as a changing area in babyhood is now a desk for doing homework. For a teen-ager, the room also can serve as a private sitting room — the bunk beds are replaced by daybeds or futons that convert from sofas to beds; the trolley can hold a television set or stereo equipment.

Along the way, parents can use

of their living space. Choose flooring that's hardy and easy to clean. Options include vinyl-coated tiles, hardwood floors, rubber-stud flooring, carpet (get one that's stain-resistant), sisal or cork matting.

Use inexpensive decorating techniques: Gilliat is a strong advocate of paint and stenciling to add excitement. Not only are they inexpensive and easy to change as a child grows, they also can be tackled by the do-it-yourselfer.

The ambitious can use paint to create a variety of motifs, from puffy clouds to a cow jumping over the moon. Or you could simply hang an ever-changing gallery of posters and prints on a plain painted wall. A large cork bulletin board is the idea place for children to hang their own artwork.

If you have your heart set on wallpaper, be sure to choose one that's washable.

Shared rooms. Like it or not, many siblings must share a room, and that puts a strain on space and privacy.

Bunk beds are the obvious space-saving choice, but also consider installing loft beds with desk and play space underneath. For children who have to share their sleeping space on an occasional basis — when a friend sleeps over — invest in a trundle bed.

As children get older, they'll want more privacy. Gilliat suggests turning the master bedroom over to them, where they'll have more space, which makes sense — children tend to spend more time in their rooms than parents. Privacy can be created with anything from folding screens to partition

walls to roller blinds hanging from the ceiling.

Install adequate lighting. The ideal room has a mix of natural, general and task lighting. Try track lighting with a dimmer switch, as well as wall lights. For task lighting, use lamps or clip-on spotlights.

Remember safety. Children spend a lot of unsupervised time in their rooms, so it's important to remove any hazards.

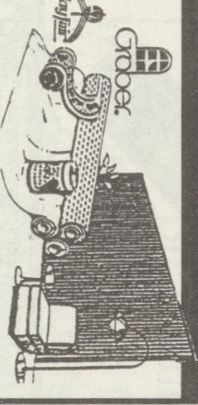
Electrical outlets should be child-proofed, and keep freestanding lights and appliances out of reach of the small and curious.

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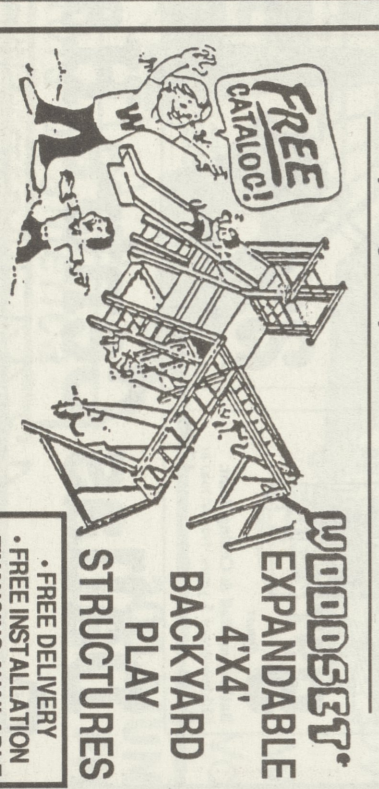


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Source: National Association of Home Builders
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Planning ahead can make packing and moving pain-free

By Sharon Achatz
Copley News Service

When it's time to get a move on — whether just down the block or across country — here are a few tips pain-free packing.

If moving an entire household, a commercial van line — which offers assistance in packing and handling — may be the best bet. If professional movers are beyond your budget or if moving from a

one-bedroom apartment, it will be less expensive to rent a truck or van and move it yourself.

To find the right professional van line, ask friends or business associates who have recently moved or real estate agents for their recommendations. Consult at least three for estimates, and make sure the company you finally decide to use provides a written estimate that includes: the hourly rate, insurance specifications, and a listing of services provided —

such as special crating required for an heirloom piano or people to pack for you.

If you decide to move yourself, reputable rental companies will help you decide which size vehicle is best for you and will also provide dollies, furniture pads, packing supplies and other necessary items.

If your homeowner insurance policy doesn't cover belongings en route to a new home, many truck rental companies offer coverage to protect household goods in transit.

Before even thinking about beginning to pack, savvy movers get rid of excess baggage. Then, establish a "don't pack this stuff" closet to store things you'll need during the trip and immediately after arriving at your new home — such as clothes and cleaning materials — as well as valuables.

When you begin packing, follow these tips:
• Start with objects that aren't used every day — such as out-of-season clothes or collectibles.
• Pack the contents of each room in separate boxes and label

the outside of each box with its contents and the room in which it should be placed in the new home.

Use small cartons for heavy items such as books and cookware, and keep the weight of each box less than 30 pounds.
• For larger boxes, put heavier items at the bottom of boxes and lighter things on top.

On moving day, accompany the mover as he takes inventory of your furnishings, making sure the condition of your items is correctly recorded.

HOMEFACTS

Apartment rental costs vary widely

These are the most-expensive and least-expensive cities for renting a typical 800 square foot apartment, with one bedroom and one bath.

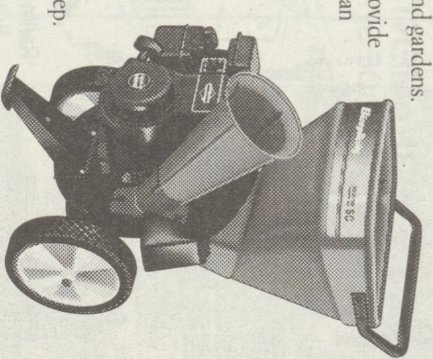
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New York 752	Wichita, Kan. 315
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Washington D.C. 708	San Antonio, Texas 325
San Francisco 693	Tulsa, Okla. 325
Ventura, Calif. 685	Houston 333
Los Angeles 682	Pensacola, Fla. 345
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SOURCES: Good Housekeeping magazine, Runtz/Immer International
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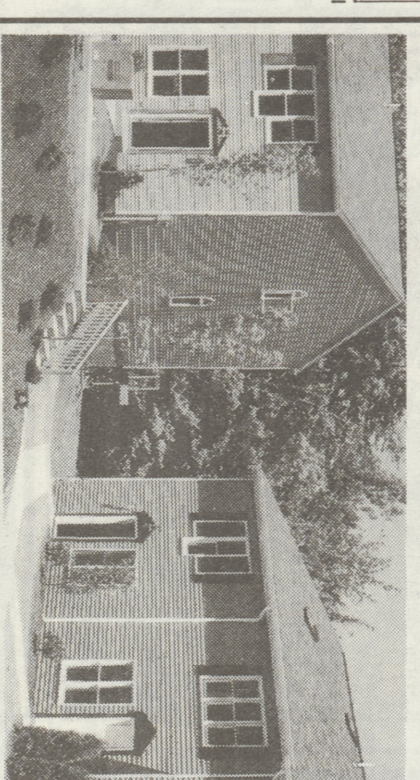
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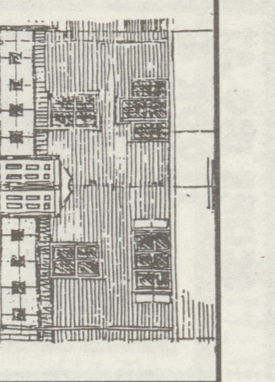
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