

Students offer tips on creating a stylish dorm space

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Living in a dorm may be a tight squeeze, but there are plenty of ways to stretch your budget and your space during your college stay. Homestyle reached out to a couple of talented interior design students for some tips on turning your temporary digs into something more livable.

While Haley Harris — a junior in the interior design program at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti — lives in an on-campus apartment, friends often ask her to decorate their dorm rooms. The budding entrepreneur also sells her handcrafted home decor, refurbished furniture and more as an artisan vendor at various locations.

At Eastern, students can request existing furniture like bunkbeds that leave enough space for a reading nook or lounge area. A raised bed with a desk below offers another way to maximize square footage. “It all depends how you want to set up the room,” says Harris.

For a friend with a roommate who had a completely different style, Harris had a design solution. “I wanted her to feel like she had her own space,” she says. This was done through the use of lighter colors that made her friend’s area feel homey and cozy, without contrasting with the other side of the room.

Because dorms often lack natural light, Harris recommends lighter colors for key elements like bedding and brighter hues for accent pillows and picture frames. “College can be stressful. Crazy colors and messy rooms can add to your stress,” she says. “When you add color in your accents, it doesn’t feel overpowering.”

Just one piece can make the space pop. “You can throw a fun blanket on the wall to add some pizzazz,” adds Harris.

DIY projects further personalize your space. “Get inspiration on Pinterest and try to do it yourself,” she says. “Some people think DIY sounds scary, but a lot of projects are easy to do and the pieces add character and uniqueness to your room.”

You can also embellish a new piece like a dresser by adding decorative knobs on the side for jewelry and scarves.

Even freebies can enhance your dorm room, like a wood pallet found on the side of the road that Harris helped a friend turn into a striking headboard. “We just distressed it and stained it because she wanted a natural look,” she says.

Harris says it’s important to surround yourself with photos of family, friends and pets and she also suggests keeping a calendar to stay organized and making the most of your limited amount of space with over-the-door organizers, stackable bins, shoe racks and shelves. “Make it feel like your own home,” she says.

Today, technology plays a major role in every dorm room. “You need charger outlets for your computer and everyone is obsessed with their phones,” says Harris who sees a lot of accents with built-in chargers like alarm clocks that can be set to music for a pleasant wake-up call.

Once college kicks in, you’re not going to want to revamp your room, says Harris. “If you do it right the first time and invest at the beginning and make it something you really love; you’ll keep it through the next four years.”