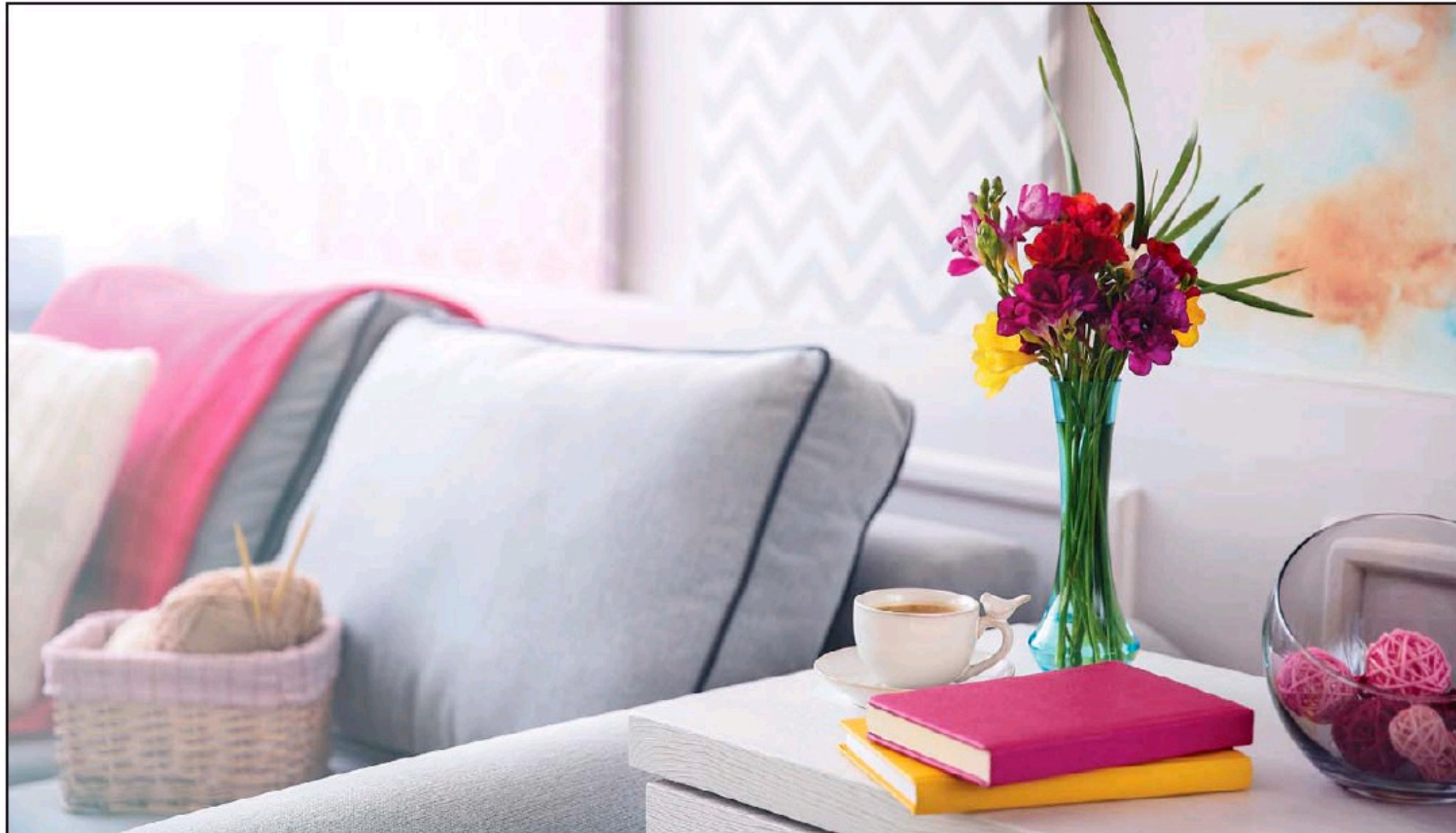


Decor matters: Making a house a home



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There's nothing like that new home smell — and that new home feel. It's exciting knowing no one else has lived in the space. No past injuries or mishaps, no past energies linger to tarnish or intrude on your new life chapter.

When it comes time to settle in with your family, however, warmth and comfort re-emerge as primary concerns. From the open-plan kitchen/dining area to each individual bedroom, you and yours will want the comfy, cozy sensation that lets you know you're just where you should be as day turns to night.

What are the best ways to quickly put your personal stamp on decor — even before the drapes are delivered? Experts say using color, texture, natural elements and meaningful objects can go a long way toward making new construction

feel inviting.

Color

It's not just kids that like to have their favorite colors around them. Studies show color has a decided effect on mood. In general, blues and greens produce a calming effect, while reds are more stimulating. But the true impact of color is highly individual. What makes one family member feel easy might put another on edge. Check in with each to ensure you aren't adding anything that will irritate or discomfit.

Look for bedclothes, window coverings, or throw rugs in the hue of choice.

"I love colorful patterned rugs and colorful mix-matched throw pillows," remarks Diane Leifer of Bleu Leman Design in Berkeley.

Experiment with varying intensities of the same color to heighten visual interest. Consider chocolate throw pillows on a brown plaid or print bedspread, with a fluffy, beige rug to complete the look. Texture

"There is something about

fabric that does wonders," says Yoko Oda of Yoko Oda Interior Design in Walnut Creek.

And it's simpler to incorporate than you might think.

"New bedding is an easy and cost-effective measure to make your bedroom cozy. It's a new, welcoming change that can instantly warm up your space."

Floor coverings create another opportunity to add comfy textures. What's more inviting than a plush real or faux sheepskin throw rug on hardwood? Or, to go further, think about layering a patterned throw over existing carpeting next to the bed, near the coffee table, or as a unifying element in a seating area.

Layered lighting is another way to create texture.

"Different sources of light in each room (ceiling, floor lamp, table lamp) make for ambiance lighting," and can instantly create the appropriate mood, according to Leifer. Nature

"Cut flowers are magical," enthuses Oda, as a way of "inviting nature inside. They freshen

up your home, add color and scent and make you feel good. Moreover, they make the space feel welcoming."

Contemplate in addition, arranging cut or dried plants — perhaps from the yard of your old home — in bedroom, living or dining spaces to help smooth the transition for homesick family members. Personal Objects/Artwork

"Artwork adds additional meaning to spaces, and an element to your home that feels unique to you," advises Oda. "Use books, objects, paintings, photographs, etc. that are personal and meaningful to you."

"I love a wall of family portraits or kids' art in mix-matched frames," adds Leifer. "And... books, books, books: Display them. They add soul to a space."

Despite its many attractions, new construction can sometimes feel stark. Adding color, texture, natural elements and personal objects throughout the home can encourage a sense of comfort from day one.

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