



Photo: Mike Chajczyk

tip:
If you don't choose books based on their covers (really, you shouldn't), consider wrapping them in coloured paper to bring a little life to your displays. Add further visual interest to your display by painting or wallpapering the back panel of the bookshelf, or the wall behind it if it has an open back.

Add colour

While this advice does the whole "don't judge a book by its cover" thing, go ahead and treat your books like true accessories, with an eye to colour and pattern. Believe it or not, books come wrapped in some truly beautiful covers that, in my opinion, can easily be placed on a shelf alongside framed or canvas art.

Create balance

When arranging your accessories, consider the weight and size of each object in relation to the others, and the bookcase itself. Smaller items organically "float" to the top, while the larger ones gravitate toward the bottom. Be sure to balance your display with some empty space. When you think you're done, take a step back and adjust the display until you're happy with the result.



Photo: Blynda Decosta



Photo: Mike Chajczyk

When grouping your collections, work in odd numbers, which creates symmetry and is generally pleasing to the eye. Place the tallest or largest item in the centre of each mini arrangement, with the smaller items on either side.

Tell the story of you

A bookshelf isn't just a place to put your stuff; it's an opportunity to showcase your style, personality and personal interests. It's a way to infuse your home with colour, texture and vibrancy. It helps tell the story of you. Put some thought into your accessories and arrangements, and what it is you want to say. Alternate your display with the changing seasons, your evolving interests and new experiences, or just on a whim. Consider it your blank canvas.



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2. Martini **SIDE TABLE** with white marble base. \$699. cb2.ca
3. The wildflower **CANDLE**. \$52. purebalanxed.com
4. Regis lounge **CHAIR** in juniper green. \$929. article.com
5. Vestervig multicolour flat woven **RUG**. \$299. ikea.ca
6. Flow **MUG** in black by Ferm Living. \$24. finnishdesignshop.com
7. Five-year keepsake **JOURNAL** set by Rifle Paper Co. \$80. indigo.ca
8. Original **BALLET SLIPPERS** in cognac. \$90. hidssinhand.com
9. Chaga coconut **CHAI**. \$17. shopalleanoak.com
10. Esbella **THROW**. \$109. mobilia.ca
11. Bullet **PEN** in gold by Hay. \$13. finnishdesignshop.com



With more than 15 years' experience as a magazine editor, writer and content creator, Sara brings her passion for design and decor to our pages each issue. Instagram: [@bysaraluck](https://www.instagram.com/bysaraluck)



style file

Style your bookcase or open shelves and elevate your space

Express your shelf

by LISA KOOISTRA

Maybe it was the arrival of Zoom calls and we all needed a cool-looking background, or we finally just got wise to the fact that bookcases and shelves can be great styling tools, but these standard items have really come into focus the last couple of years. Outside of a video view, a well-styled open shelf can elevate and enhance the rest of a room, adding character and interest, and yes, function, too.

I often use open shelving in my own designs, and it's as requested and loved by my clients as it is by me. In one project, we aligned the theme of the accessories in relation to the room's broader aesthetic, which featured wood and organic elements, with a neutral palette. Our shelf display had muted tones, with a mix of objects and materials that resonated with the rest of the space.

Here are some of my personal tips to style a bookshelf.

Start from scratch

This is my best advice when decorating, whether it's a bookshelf or a whole room. Clearing out everything may sound overwhelming at first, but it makes lighter work of the styling itself. It's also the best way to take stock of the shelf and the space around it, which will impact what goes on it.

Be selective

When choosing your accessories, do so wisely, as there is a fine line between a "collection" and "clutter." The space on your shelf is precious, so don't waste it on pieces you don't love, and certainly don't waste it by cluttering it up again. Whatever you choose, make sure your selections have the desired impact in the room.



Photo: Blynda Decoste

Look for variety

Try incorporating an assortment of items in alternate groupings, such as books mingled with photos, art, baskets and pottery. Vary your material selections as well, with a mix of pieces in wood, metal, glass and stone, in a range of textures. Plants are a great addition, too.



Photo: Stephanie Buchman