How to Avoid the 5 Worst Living Room Design Mistakes

Layouts that thwart conversation. Furniture that's too chunky. Rugs that are too runty. Design pros share the living-room decor mistakes they see most often and how to steer clear.

DO IT (BEAUTIFULLY) RIGHT In a local semi-detached house by Warsaw design firm Colombe Studio, carefully chosen décor doesn't crowd the room or the view, resulting in a truly inviting living room.

THE RELATIVELY NARROW function of a bedroom or dining room largely dictates those spaces' décor. A home's communal chill chamber, however, has to be a lot of things to a lot of people: intimate and sophisticated enough for guests sipping aperitifs and cozy enough for family couch-potato Sundays. With so much asked of living rooms, the potential for decorating missteps can daunt even experts.

Nina Edwards Anker's first principle: Start with ease—navigability, comfort, visual calm. "The worst error I see in living rooms is overcrowding," said the founder of New York City's Nea Studio. "Spaces, like paintings, need room to breathe." Among her tips: Allow for ample storage to tuck away clutter. Meanwhile, Aileen Warren, of Jackson Warren Interiors in Houston, warns against filling the room with every stick of furniture on your wish list. "Be sure there's enough space for traffic to move comfortably in and out of the seating groups," she said.

Here, designers identify five other living-room gaffes they see far too often, and share their professional workarounds.

ILLUSTRATION: KATIE CAREY

"Recently, a client picked a single piece, an oversize armchair, then **tried to design her entire living space around it**. She realized, after hiring me, that she had to sell the armchair because it clashed with and crowded the sofa and storage cabinet we picked." — *Nina Edwards Anker, founder, Nea Studio, New York City*

"The worst is when people **purchase multiple pieces of furniture in the same, neutral upholstery fabric**. Sure, the goal was to be cohesive, but the result is unfortunately a space that is sterile, slightly cold and without personality." —*Glenna Stone, interior designer, Philadelphia*

"I usually see a massive sofa and a bunch of **ditzy, underscale pieces** because nothing else will fit properly." —*Liz Caan, interior designer, Boston*

"I've seen **large blowup pool toys** laying about a primary living room and oversize shiny La-Z-Boys pushed into corners without anything else in the room." —*Melanie Hay, interior designer, Toronto*