



# 'UPSTYLING' THE BHK LIFE

10 DESIGN TIPS TO STYLE UP  
A MILLENNIAL'S RENTED APARTMENT

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHS  
SHUVAJIT PAYNE & KUNAL BHATIA

No to wall brackets. No to posters. No to alterations. The displeased landlord's nod of disapproval is all too familiar for those in rented apartments. Worse still, the negotiations repeat every few months for new apartments in new job locations with new landlords. High-pressure jobs and a race up the corporate ladder call for a new-age nomadic existence. Yet, millennials who embrace this mobile lifestyle need not settle for a makeshift residence and compromise on their aesthetic sensibilities. Whether for hosting parties, working from home or simply unwinding in one's personal space, these 10 design tips can make a rented apartment look like a sanctuary of style.

## THE COLOUR PALETTE

We all love shopping but we don't consider whether the new Kashmiri *dhurry* goes with the straw table-runner or if they together complement the bright curtains! The trick to keep it harmonious is to choose a colour palette for your furnishings. Solid, neutral colour combinations such as brown and rust, hues of blue or shades of white are recommended.

## A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

In our rushed lives, we get used to the piles of laundry, a jigsaw of old newspapers, scattered bills and probably an array of chargers of different shapes and sizes. To avoid this chaotic maze, designate storage areas and use containers of the same colour, material, and shape. Try something chic such as wooden crates, bamboo boxes or cane



**Clockwise from left:**  
A Japanese tea set brings a Zen-like feel to a penthouse designed by FADD Studio; The Workshop chose to go bold with this mustard-coloured wall in an apartment; Studio Nishita Kamdar's chalkboard wall lets one doodle away, while the bedroom features a complementary colour scheme for the walls, accessories and upholstery.





## INTERIORS



**Left:** Quirky use of vintage trunks and glass jars by The Workshop.

**Right:** A clean and sophisticated dining setting designed by Jannat Vasi Interior Design.



baskets. Prop storage cabinets against a window sill to create a cosy lounging area. Given our cluttered lives, a little simplicity at home can be a relief. So move away from the hassles of upkeep required for an ornamental home decor towards a minimalist design.

### PAINT AWAY

Don't shy away from repainting. Be adventurous by doing it yourself and turn it into a fun activity. Keep it simple with neutral colours while adding unexpected contrasts with accent walls. Painting your apartment ivory will give it a contemporary feel and will also make coloured furnishings stand out. Repaint any fixtures or built-in furniture that does not match your colour palette.

### PLAY WITH LIGHTS

Unmount shades that were provided with the apartment if they don't gel with your taste and opt for portable floor and table lamps instead. Brass lamps or vintage metal lamps are recommended. Use warm light bulbs for a homely feel. If you are in mood for some DIY, ideas are aplenty – try LEDs inside frosted glass bottles, paper origami lights or hemp-twine spheres. Make a personal statement through your lamp collection by using natural products such as

bamboo or jute with ethnic designs. Avoid direct light glares by strategically placing bulbs behind headboards, screens or behind shelves.

### CHOOSING FURNITURE

The biggest hassle for a professional on the move is furniture. It's tempting to manage with inexpensive pieces given the option of disposing them when relocating. It's a myth though that high-quality and well-designed solid wood furniture cannot be resold as easily. In fact, solid wood has the added benefit of retaining value over years. Look for online bargains or head to local antique markets such as Chor Bazaar in Mumbai or Commercial Street in Bengaluru. Don't forget to pick up a uniquely-designed armchair to create a personal reading nook.

### MIX AND MATCH

Get hold of a carpenter and go bold with your ideas – turn a vintage trunk into a centre table, a





**Above:** An Indian-themed living room put together by The Polka House.  
**Below:** Soyuz Talib Architects livened up a passage wall with a humorous caricature.

wardrobe into a bookshelf or a ladder into a clothes rack! Or get creative yourself with ingenious centre table ideas – wooden cylinders, a white crate, quirky boxes or a coloured tyre, the possibilities are endless! Stacks of books or magazines can also make for a personalised bedside table.

**AUTOMATE WITH GADGETS**

Wireless is hip, sleek, and definitely the way to go. Start with wireless charging mats; a Bluetooth home theatre; make your TV smart with a media-casting device and setup a wireless multimedia jukebox out of your laptop. Take it a notch higher by using solar sensor lights and app-controlled automated lighting. Now you can wake up with your favourite TV channel or return in the evening with door lights switching on as you approach and mood music streaming as you enter your home.

**DRESS UP THE SURFACES**

Finishes of some walls or fittings might be a complete misfit in your decor. Simply cover them up! Use large rugs for floors and try runners or photocollages covered with glass for tabletops. To cover up a patch, place a tray or a simple





## INTERIORS

centrepiece such as a glass bowl or a potted plant. For vertical surfaces, try repainting or using wallpapers. You could also turn some surfaces into pinboards or frame up posters, paintings or mirrors. Mirrors, especially, add a sense of spaciousness. For fixing frames on walls, high-power suction hooks are a great alternative to nails. Optionally, just placing photo frames or full-length mirrors on the floor against a wall can speak volumes about your design personality. On the other hand, why not cover a dull surface with chalkboard paint and unleash your artistic doodling abilities!

### ETHNIC INSPIRATIONS

Simple Indian home decor products are vastly underrated. Experiment with *chattais*, *moodahs* and bolsters to create a charming seating area. Don't forget to get new kitchenware – try terracotta pots, earthen cups, disposable areca nut plates for parties and maybe even bamboo drinking mugs! For regular use, shifting to copper plates, jugs and glasses can be a booster for your health, and for your eyes!

### GO GREEN

If you are wondering how to water plants during your travels, then don't worry! Money plants, aloe vera, snake plants, peace lily, anthurium, and dracaena reflexa look beautiful and grow indoors without the hassles of regular watering. Set up a kitchen garden in your apartment and you will be able to harvest herbs, tomatoes, mushrooms, peppers, carrots and microgreens for your salad right from the balcony. If there is paucity for space, opt for a vertical garden; many of which are also self-watering.

It's time to upstyle! ■



**Clockwise from left:** Table lamps, such as this brass one used by Design Office Mumbai, impart a homely feel; Vertical gardens are apt for city apartments, such as this one by Soyuz Talib Architects; Unsightly speakers hidden away in wooden boxes act as a pedestal to display art in this apartment by Kunal Shah Designs.

