

LISTENING TO THE  

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**HOME'S STYLE**

BY AUDRA SLINKEY



## Day Three – Listening to the Home’s Style

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.”

*Robert Frost*

I was inspired to use the final stanza in one of my favorite poems to illustrate where staging and redesign/decorating diverge. Redesign identifies the very personal in order to create a “custom” home that is perfectly designed to both the home style and to the owners’ favorite style, colors, patterns, collections, photographs, family, etc. The home is a one-of-a-kind, personal, functional and comfortable reflection of those who live there.

Staging is not so. Staging a home puts it on the well-traveled road or freeway of homes that most people will prefer and aspire to own. There are universal styles that the masses gravitate towards, as well as regional considerations.

In this section, I’m going to identify some primary Home Styles, especially by region. I will then tackle separately the development of style in a home for Redesign and for Home Staging.

### **A Bit about Style – A Personal Experience**

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A sense of style is the ability to recognize the mood you want to create in each room while keeping it suitable for the home’s architecture and the region in which it is located. Suitability is simply recognizing what is appropriate in any given situation. Remember our First Impression questionnaire:

### **What is the architectural style of the home? What is the style of the rooms?**

You must have a general understanding of the common architectural styles of homes BEFORE you can identify and tap into characteristics of style *within* a home. Usually you’ll find that the architectural style is the preferred style of the owner, otherwise they would not have been attracted to the home and purchased it in the first place.

About five years ago I renovated and decorated a large rental condo in the Mammoth Mountain area, a popular Southern California Ski area. The condo was Craftsman style and its furnishings were to represent that cozy, snowy, craftsman look while having the functionality of a rental. I have to say I struggled with this one because I was so out of my element, having never lived near the snow! Research was needed!



Let's talk about the different architectural styles of homes by region and look at some examples to see what gives them their curb appeal. Since I'm a firm believer in the visual, I've created a quick Cheat Sheet you can show your clients in order to identify styles they are attracted to. As you can see from the Cheat Sheet, it's not hard to recognize a style when you walk up to the door!

I also think it's a good idea to go to [www.houzz.com](http://www.houzz.com) and search by "style" and your own metro area to further enhance your knowledge of both exterior and interior styles. Sort by "All time most popular" and you will have a good snapshot of what a home buyer is looking for. This is just another way to train your eye for design.

## Architectural Home Styles - A Quick Cheat Sheet



**Colonial:** Colonial homes are the homes common in the original thirteen American colonies (and those that were settled soon after). Examples of Colonial homes range from simple—think divided Dutch doors and dominant, central chimneys—to grand—picture Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. **Similar styles that fall under the Colonial umbrella are: Federal, Georgian and Early American home styles.**



**Georgian:** Categorized under the umbrella of Colonial homes, Georgian homes are symmetrical, tasteful and historic-looking, often with dentils under the eaves. The Georgian house plan (1700-1776) tends to be more grandiose, with a massive, sturdy appearance. Georgian homes sometimes have a third story, or at least the appearance of one. An elaborate entrance, shuttered windows, a hip roof and brick are common in Georgian homes.



**Farmhouse:** Enjoying renewed popularity, traditional farm homes have withstood the test of time. The most prominent characteristic of a farmhouse is a porch that stretches along the front of the home and may wrap around to the side or rear. A steeply pitched roof typically runs along the length of the home and is sometimes accented by dormers and gables.



**Federal:** Federal homes are symmetrical, tasteful and historic-looking, often with dentils under the eaves. The federal, or Adam, style was based on the work of the Scottish architect Robert Adam. Federal-style homes became popular between 1780 and 1830, and are symmetrical, two-story, rectangular-shaped designs embellished with elliptical fan lights over the front door, curved wrought-iron stair railings and Palladian windows.



**Early American:** Similar to farmhouses, but without a porch, Early American homes feature lap siding and shuttered windows. These homes, which fall under the umbrella of Colonial homes, also boast a boxed shape and a symmetrical design, which lend a formal, grand elegance to their simple lines. The floor plans of Early American-style homes are predictable, and generally involve a central stairway, surrounded by four "quadrants" of living space.



**Cape Cod:** Cape Cod homes cropped up on the eastern seaboard between 1710 and 1850. Abundant timber resources encouraged the expansion of these traditional, one-room English cottages and marked them forever as the quintessential New England style. Cape Cod homes are simple and symmetrical, usually one-and-a-half story homes, and often incorporate dormer windows for an even warmer touch. Cape cods also tend to have dominant rooflines that extend down to the first floor ceiling level.

## Architectural Home Styles - A Quick Cheat Sheet Continued



**Contemporary:** Contemporary homes enjoyed their highest levels of popularity during the 1970s, but the style still retains its appeal today. Pure contemporary homes display such eye-catching features as asymmetrical design, unusual angles, flat roofs with varied or multi-level rooflines, boldly articulated windows, silo-like towers, little ornamentation and vertical siding. Contemporary design is, in fact, a post-modern interpretation of the modernist mindset, which pared buildings down to stark edifices with little warmth.



**Southwestern Homes:** Southwestern homes are typical of those found in southern California, Nevada or Arizona, but are not necessarily representative of Spanish homes. Many Southwestern homes offer stucco walls and tile roofs to buffer the sun and heat of the Southwestern climate.



**Ranch:** Ranch style homes are common, owing to their cost-effective construction. Little more than rectangular floor plans with roofs, ranch homes offer little exterior ornamentation, with basic exterior framing. Many a track home builder used these simple styles when creating homes in the 70's and 80's.



**Country:** One of the most popular styles of house design in the United States right now is traditional country homes. Typically, country homes combine several traditional architectural details on their well-proportioned, cozy facades. Look for porches, gables, lap siding, shuttered windows, and dormer windows on country homes. The famous nostalgic look that is characteristic of country homes lends them their enduring appeal. Picture a home in a Norman Rockwell painting and, inevitably, you'll be imagining a country home. Perfect examples of country homes are also found in New England and the South.



**Craftsman or Bungalow:** The arts and crafts movement (1895-1935) grew from a reaction to the over-the-top house design of Victorian homes during 1870-1900. Embracing simplicity, handiwork, and natural materials, Craftsman homes, are cozy with wood siding and (often) a stone-based porch. Heavy stone porch column supports, columns that taper as they ascend, high wainscoting and wide projecting eaves are all typical features.



**Coastal:** Coastal homes, sometimes referred to as beach homes, have a distinctive look that's both unique and refreshing. They borrow from a variety of home styles, including Spanish, Mediterranean and even Victorian. In Florida, beach homes tend to be perched on stilts to provide a measure of defense against the hurricanes. Coastal homes usually include panoramic windows and outdoor living spaces, to capitalize on the water views.

## Architectural Home Styles - A Quick Cheat Sheet Continued



**English Cottage:** Though traditionally defined as “small” or having only one room, the charming style of English country cottages has inspired larger and more elaborate designs, yet maintains the cozy comfort that we identify with the “cottage” style. On the exterior, the English country cottage commonly features half-hip roofs, shingles or stucco siding.

**Elements of European or Tudor styling may also be evident in these homes.**



**Mediterranean or Spanish:** Mediterranean or Spanish homes mimic the homes traditionally found in Mediterranean countries, particularly Spain, France and Italy. A low-pitched, red tile roof is the most distinctive characteristic of this style. Usually stucco, these exotic homes often include a courtyard or patio, columns and arched windows and openings.



**Traditional Homes:** Traditional homes can be virtually any architectural style, with the exception of contemporary (and the styles that are considered contemporary styles). Traditional homes are reminiscent of historic homes, and are imbued with a “warmth” that is sometimes difficult to quantify. Typical architectural elements include gable or hip rooflines, porches, shuttered or arched windows, soft ornamentation, exterior arches, and other classic touches.



**Tudor:** Tudor homes are drawn loosely from late medieval English homes particularly Shakespearean days. The term “Tudor Revival” in American architecture generally covers the blend of a variety of elements of late English medieval styles, including Elizabethan and Jacobean. Most Tudor homes have stucco or masonry exteriors that are accented by ornamental half-timbering, massive chimneys and steep gable roofs. Common features include arched entries and tall, narrow windows.



**French Homes:** Decorative shutters, quoins and arches with accenting keystones above the windows and doors are all features commonly found in French homes. Copper-topped bay windows and a symmetrical facade of brick or stucco are other typical defining elements. A high-pitched hip roof unifies the exterior features and is the most dominant characteristic of French homes.



**Victorian:** Victorian homes is actually the Queen Anne Victorian home style from the late Victorian period (1870-1900), named after Queen Victoria of England. During this period, Victorian homes became one of the most popular home styles in the US. Victorians reflected the new ability and freedom to add elaborate detail and decoration to a homes facade. Features may include asymmetrical massing, “gingerbread” ornamentation, fish scale shingles, turrets and/or towers at the corners, elaborate and intricately decorated porches, and varieties of patterns and sometimes quite vibrant colors.

## Architectural Style Recap

The list of architectural styles above is certainly not exhaustive, and in fact there are many different variants of each of the styles. Most people live in a home that is a blend of a couple of architectural styles, allowing for flexibility in design decisions for the inside of the home. Styles *within* the home vary a bit from *architectural* style as well. When choosing pieces within the home, size matters, as seen in our proportion and scale module.

You'll notice that the first page our Cheat Sheet features styles that allow for formality in your decorating scheme, while styles on the second page tend toward the casual and contemporary. The third page involves more European influences; these homes can be decorated using either traditional, formal pieces or mostly casual pieces.

Once you've identified the architectural blend or what I like to call the "integrity" of the home, it's fun to brainstorm on the personality and style you'll want to give the home on the inside.

## Architectural Space and Shape Problems and Solutions

Struggling with what to do with architectural "problem areas"? No problem, here is a quick guide to design solutions for architecturally off beat spaces:

<b>Problem - Long Rooms</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Divide the space into two or three separate groupings and use area rugs to anchor each group in the divided space.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use square area rugs to visually "fatten" the space</li> <li>Use dark colors on the end walls to visually advance the wall towards you</li> </ul>
<b>Problem – Narrow Spaces</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go diagonal with a bed in a bedroom or a couch in a living area</li> <li>Use square area rugs to visually "fatten" the space</li> <li>Galley Kitchens should have light cabinets with a dramatic color artwork/piece on narrow wall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use a dramatic color, painting, or mirror on the short wall</li> <li>Carefully choose each piece and remove clutter</li> <li>Keep long walls visually free from wall hangings to avoid advancement</li> </ul>
<b>Problem – Low Ceilings</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hang drapes artificially high</li> <li>Use tall pieces or art to create a sense of height</li> <li>Definitely paint ceilings white</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use as many vertical lines as possible i.e. wall paper, torch ere light or bookcase</li> <li>Lighten upward</li> </ul>
<b>Problem – Cold rooms</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use cozy colors in paint and fabric like orange, yellow and red. My first office was painted Paprika and I loved the warmth of that room!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add elements that give comfort like pillows, throws, drapes, lamps and organic elements like baskets, wood and greenery</li> </ul>

## A Bit about Home Style – Allow for Freedom and Flexibility

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Personally, I love so many styles that it's difficult for me to simply "settle" into my Spanish Mediterranean styled home. I tire easily of one specific style and find that the mood I'm trying to create in my home varies from season to season. I go formal during the fall and winter while lightening it up casually during spring and summer. Color has a lot to do with mood in a room, so we'll tackle that in our color section.



**Note:** The best advice I was ever given when it comes to purchasing furnishings for a home was to stick with more neutral colors for expensive pieces (i.e. couch and window coverings) while playing with different colors and textures in pillows and accessories to change the personality of the room.

Guess what? You don't have to religiously stick with one style; you can blend styles a bit in keeping with the integrity of the home. For example, a Spanish Mediterranean style home can also blend into Tuscan, Old World or Coastal styles to some degree. Why? Because the threads that bind all of those styles are the Mediterranean Sea and the base style of the home.

While it's good to identify the architectural home style first to form a basis for furniture design choices, remember that there is freedom and flexibility within each home's architectural style to furnish the inside differently, so that it appeals to buyers OR appeals to owners.

For both Redesign and Home Staging, it's good to advise clients to choose pieces that give them flexibility later on and are not the "trend" at the time. Now I'm going to tackle Home Style when it comes to Redesign and Staging separately, because here is where the road diverges wildly.



**Danger:** There are dangers with too much style or personality in a home. An owner is more likely to tire of the home quickly, and it can easily become dated. **Too much of one thing is simply too much.**



## Home Style and Redesign - It's Very Personal

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The style in a home NOT for sale should be a distinct reflection of the owner's tastes, passions, lifestyle and mood. Tapping into a client's style and translating it into a vision for the home is the distinct and wonderful difference between Redesign and Staging.

You may have taken a Redesign course that mentioned nothing about finding the owner's style because redesign is using what they already have, right? Wrong! Remember the three phases to correct home staging:

- **Using What the Clients Have to Transform the Space**
- **Suggested Purchases to Complete the Look**
- **Suggested Cosmetic Improvements for Maximum ROI**

These three phases work wonderfully with Redesign as well! Let's face it, most clients want you to use what they have and love, but are also looking for direction to give the space style, warmth and personal charm. Most would also value a priority list of cosmetic changes to make for resale value down the road. Just going in and using what they have is not enough in my book. Cover all three phases much like you would in staging (see Lulu's perfect example in Week 2, Module 3). Here is where HSR might differ from other training companies, because we are firm believers in the power of the visual.

How do you cover all three phases in a Redesign? Specifically follow these three steps in order to tap into your client's inner style:

1. Identify your client's preference as to architectural styles by showing them the Cheat Sheet and having them pick their favorites – Formal or Casual
2. Identify your client's personal tastes, colors, passions and collections - Style
3. Identify how your client's family uses each space – Function
4. Identify simple accessories--these go a long way in pulling it all together – Details

Using the lifestyle questionnaire in Week One, Forms will greatly help you as you work with your clients. You'll also get a good idea of the kinds of things your clients prefer just by walking through the house.

Furniture companies and catalogs provide strong clues as to what type of furniture your clients might most prefer. For standard size homes up to 4000 sq. ft., try to always have these common catalogs on hand and ask your client which furniture styles they tend to gravitate towards: Pottery Barn (Contemporary Traditional), West Elm (Modern Contemporary), Ballard Designs (Traditional European Influence), Pier One (Contemporary Eastern Eclectic), Ethan Allen (mix of styles) and Ikea (Minimalist Modern). The good news is that you have a significant Members Discount at these popular stores!



**Visualization:** Look through the Architectural style cheat sheet and pick out your dream house. What would it look like? What blend of style is your house currently now that you know how to identify architectural styles.



**Hands On:** Walk through the rooms of your home. Does each room have a style that is representative of the home and your family's tastes? Is it formal or casual? Are your family's favorite colors, collections and passions well represented?

*"It's important to imbue your living environment with your own distinct style and personality. When surrounded with comforting personal items, colors, passions and textures you love, furnishings that work for you – not against you – and art and accessories that inspire, you feel less stressed, more at home, more balanced and more...you. Your home is the canvas of your life, so make sure you make it a work of art. Every corner of your home should be a composition!" – The Emotional House*

## Home Style and Staging - It's Nothing Personal

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Make no mistake, EVERY home, whether staged or redesigned, should have a sense of style. **A staged home can still have a sense of style--just not a personal style.** We'll talk a lot more about neutralizing in further sections, but for now let's talk about giving a staged home a sense of style, so that the general buyer falls in love with it. First, identify whether the home is formal or informal given its architectural style and then blend the prevailing style of the region that fits with the current architectural style of the home. Those catalogs mentioned above will have some simple pieces that will enhance the look you are striving for.

Below is a Home Style Visual Guide, showing various ways to add style and personality to a room without fear of profiling the seller. You'll see that style is usually achieved in phase two staging where the seller makes small, investment purchases that go a long way in modernizing and updating the style of the home. The Home Style Visual Guide can also be used to help in your redesign projects; show the pictures to the owner and ask which styles he or she gravitates toward.



**Hands On:** Look at the Home Style Visual Guide below and identify your favorite styles, textures, colors and themes. Do they coincide with the style you chose for your rooms above in your walk through? Do they inspire you?



**Note:** I recommend taking this Home Style Visual Guide to BOTH your staging and redesign client's homes:

**Redesign Clients** - Have your redesign clients review each photo telling you what they like and don't like about the room. Have them choose their favorite living room, kitchen, bedroom, etc...believe me, very soon you'll start to see a pattern and a clear picture of what home style your clients gravitate towards.

**Home Staging Clients** - Use this Home Style Visual Guide to help them disassociate from their home and begin to SEE the look we are trying to achieve for them. Use it also has an intro to your Redesign Consultations to up sell your Move-In Redesign service.



**Tip:** In the Comprehensive Color Module, you'll be able to combine your assessment of your client's personal color style with their home style for providing answers to creating a complete and personal redesign!

**Home Style Visual Living Room Examples:**

What colors, styles and accessories do you like and dislike about each living room?



**Home Style Visual Bedroom Examples:**

What colors, styles and accessories do you like and dislike about each bedroom?



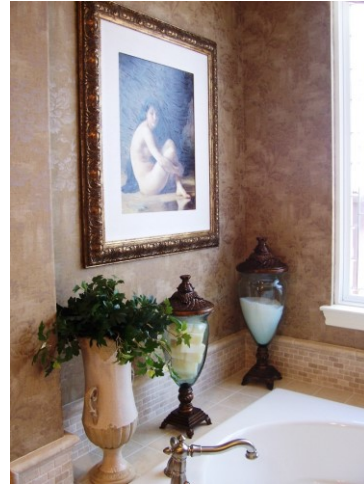
**Home Style Visual Dining Room Examples:**

What colors, styles and accessories do you like and dislike about each dining room?



**Home Style General Visual Examples:**

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## Home Style Recap

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You'll notice that in almost every Home Style Visual photo above, it's virtually impossible to profile exactly who lives there. While each room has great style, it is a generally pleasing style that nearly everyone (particularly a buyer) could appreciate.

We'll talk more about Architectural Elements and Home Style when we look at room-by-room staging and redesign.



**Hands On:** Consider other ways you can use the Home Style Visual Guide with your clients and for your business. Consider creating your own using your own photos.



**Danger:** Keep an eye out for competing styles in the home. While many design books and magazines tout the display of various styled pieces in a room, it can RARELY be pulled off nicely. Mixing styles that have no common thread usually only creates confusion and disparity, thus breaking our rhythm.