

Finding FOCUS

Creating a Focal Point in Your Home

By Jessica Cinnamon

Photo: Stephani Buchman

A focal point is something – anything – that attracts the eye in a given space. In photography or a painting, it is the point at which the "eye" or lens capturing the image is focused. In interior design, a focal point is similar: it is an area that draws attention due to being more dramatic than other areas in the space. In a room, a focal point can come in many forms. It can be built-in or a temporary element; it can be large or small; it can even be outside of the room itself (more on this below!). The only rule is that the focal point must command attention. Beyond this, there are a few different ways of creating a focal point and ensuring it has the right emphasis.

Highlighting Existing Focal Points

Many homes, and even most rooms, will already have a focal point built right in, such as a fireplace, a window with a great view, or another notable architectural feature. This is where the focus should fall. If you're having trouble identifying the focal point, clear the room and view it from the entrance. Where does the eye naturally gravitate? Odds are, that is the focal point. Now, reorganize the space with a focus around this focal point.

A fireplace can be highlighted by arranging furniture to create a cozy seating area that draws attention and guests to this central feature. Add further emphasis by accessorizing the mantel with carefully curated artwork, a large mirror or decorative objects.

If the focal point is a window, frame the view with window treatments that enhance rather than obstruct the sightlines. Arrange furniture to maximize the view, positioning seating areas facing the windows or patio doors to make the most of the outdoor scenery.

Other architectural features, such as exposed beams, intricate moldings or arched doorways, can be highlighted with strategic lighting or decorative accents. Use contrasting paint colours or wallpaper to emphasize these stunning details and make them stand out as focal points within the room.

Some larger rooms can have multiple focal points. Treat each one as its own space, with dedicated elements to highlight the focus.

Creating a Focal Point

Some rooms don't have an obvious focal point, but it's easy to create one. Infuse your space with personality and charm by adorning a prominent wall with captivating artwork. Opt for oversized pieces or a gallery wall arrangement to command attention and create character. Consider artworks that reflect your personal style or evoke a particular mood, whether it's a vibrant abstract painting, a collection of vintage photographs, or a striking sculpture. Experiment with placement and framing to achieve the desired visual impact, ensuring that the artwork becomes the focal point that anchors the room's design.

Lighting is another natural focus in a room. Statement pieces such as dazzling chandeliers or sculptural pendant lights double as works of art, and from a focus standpoint, treat them the same way. Choose designs that complement the room's aesthetic while adding an element of drama and sophistication. Position the lighting fixture strategically, such as above a dining table or in the centre of a living room, to draw the eye upward and create a stunning focal point that commands attention day and night.





MY PRO TIPS *for Perfect Focal Points*

1. Scale Matters – Oversized pieces tend to command attention, but balance is key. Make sure your focal point feels intentional, not overwhelming.

2. Layer Textures – Mix materials, finishes, and textures around the focal point to enhance visual interest and depth.

3. Limit Competing Statements – One room, one hero. Avoid multiple dramatic elements that compete for attention; let your focal point shine.

Do not forget that Furniture can also provide a great focal point. A statement piece of furniture, such as a sofa, bed or dining table, can serve as a focal point in its own right. Furniture in contrasting colours and textures will also draw the eye. Distinct forms can also foster emphasis, For example, a dining table, an occasional chair or a large wall or cabinet. Place this piece into the space first, then build the rest of the room around it.

A focal point demands to be celebrated. When you let it take the spotlight, it will anchor the space, become a gathering place for people, and create interest. So, show your focal point the attention it deserves!



Jessica Cinnamon is the award-winning Principal Designer and founder of Toronto-based Jessica Cinnamon Design Inc. They provide complete bespoke design services throughout Ontario, Canada and the United States. @Jessica_cinnamon_design
jessicacinnamondesign.com