



# HOUSING

## Efficient furniture arrangement II

no. 9.515

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### Quick Facts...

The most convenient path from one place to another is short, direct and open.

Though different in each space, all well-planned interiors have one common characteristic—a coordination of design elements and principles.

Consider the overall or complete space since one large item may create more spaciousness than several small items.

The real test of an efficient furniture arrangement is that it provides an attractive, convenient and comfortable space for you and your family's daily life.

For information on developing a floorplan, marking traffic patterns, analyzing family activities and human spatial requirements, see fact sheet, *Efficient furniture arrangement, Part I*.

With floorplan and furniture cutouts in hand and knowledge of your family's needs and spatial requirements, you are ready to begin trial furniture arrangements. Remember to keep all furnishings out of the traffic patterns. While it is possible and sometimes permissible to redirect a natural traffic pattern, bear in mind that your goal is convenience and comfort.

The most convenient path from one place to another is short, direct and open (not filled with detours around furniture or objects).

Place the cutouts representing the furniture and equipment of the major activity grouping on the floorplan. (See Figure 1.)

Locate the largest or most important pieces first and fill in with the smaller or less important ones. Ask the following questions about the new arrangement:

- Have only necessary furnishings been included in the arrangement? (Refer to the chart the family completed.) If excess pieces are included, what is their purpose?
- What effect does someone else walking by have on this activity? Will there be space? Will it disturb the activity?
- Could the activity be accomplished more efficiently by facing it toward the remainder of the space, or facing it toward a wall?
- Are all of the furnishings for this activity arranged for efficient use of time, motion and energy?
- Will others need to be protected from sounds, smells, lighting conditions, etc.? If so, how can this be done?
- If there are sharp edges, cutting surfaces or other safety hazards, can they be remedied?

Once this has been completed for the major activity grouping, continue to locate minor furniture groupings in the same manner. For each grouping, consider the questions stated above.

### Making It Attractive

Though different in each space, all well-planned interiors have one common characteristic—a coordination of design elements and principles. It is essential to remember that changes in design elements result in corresponding changes in design principles.

The overall or complete space must be considered, since one large item, such as a storage wall, may create a more spacious appearance in a small area than several small tables and cabinets.

Think about the spaces you are planning and the effects you want to achieve.

Some specific suggestions for furniture arrangement are listed below.

- Place most pieces of furniture parallel or at right angles to a wall. Small or occasional pieces can be turned slightly for visual relief. With rare exception, avoid placing pieces across the corners of a room.

- Better energy efficiency (and more healthy furnishings and fabrics) is achieved if objects are placed far enough away from radiators, registers and cold air return ducts to permit easy circulation of heated or cooled air.

- For physical comfort, avoid placing seating pieces near cold or hot outside walls and drafty windows. (Psychologically people feel cooler sitting near an uncovered window, particularly at night, even though the window opening may not be drafty.)

- Determine the one major element in the space. This might be an architectural feature (fireplace, bookcase wall), important piece of furniture (armoire, breakfront) or a highly-prized piece of art. Balance the major element with another—either architectural or one created by another furniture grouping.

- Balance soft surfaces (upholstered pieces) with equal weights in hard surfaces (woods, metals, plastics).

## Furniture Arrangement Checklist

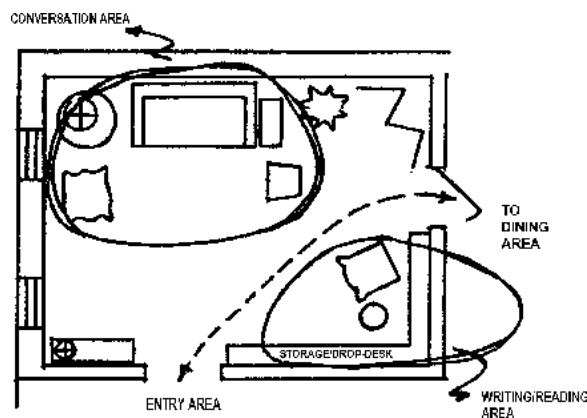
Try different arrangements in the space using the checklist in Table 1. Put a check-mark in the column after those statements that apply. The column with the largest number of checks will probably be the best arrangement.

Once an arrangement that seems feasible on the floorplan has been arrived at, try it out by moving the actual furnishings according to the plan. While some slight adjustments may have to be made to compensate for design relationships that were not apparent on the floorplan, the real test of an efficient furniture arrangement is that it provides an attractive, convenient and comfortable space for you and your family's daily life.

## References

St. Marie, Satenig. *Homes Are For People*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973.

*Family Housing Handbook*. Midwest Plan Service. Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, 1971.



**Figure 1. Trial furniture arrangements should allow, when possible, the natural traffic pattern to define activity areas. When redefining a natural traffic pattern, the traffic lanes from one place to another should be kept short, direct and open.**

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**Table 1: Furniture arrangement checklist.**

	Try different ways:			
	#1	#2	#3	#4
<b>General</b>				
Furniture does not interfere when door swings	_____	_____	_____	_____
Furniture does not block electric light switches	_____	_____	_____	_____
Furniture does not block heat outlets	_____	_____	_____	_____
Furniture does not interfere with opening of windows	_____	_____	_____	_____
Furniture has been grouped for different activities desired	_____	_____	_____	_____
Storage has been provided near the point of use	_____	_____	_____	_____
Adequate lighting has been provided throughout the room	_____	_____	_____	_____
Traffic lanes have been kept open; major pathways are 3' wide, or more	_____	_____	_____	_____
Conversation areas place people within 8 to 10 feet of each other	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tables of suitable height are provided near chairs or beds	_____	_____	_____	_____
Table height plus lamp base height to bottom of shade-eye height when seated	_____	_____	_____	_____
Furniture is arranged in groups which balance each other around room	_____	_____	_____	_____
Spacing between furniture is uneven, for greater interest	_____	_____	_____	_____
Furniture that might over-balance is blended in color with background	_____	_____	_____	_____
Color is distributed rhythmically around room	_____	_____	_____	_____
Vertical balance can be achieved with windows, furniture, pictures	_____	_____	_____	_____
Furniture is placed so eye can move rhythmically around walls (visualize)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Space in front of view windows has been kept open	_____	_____	_____	_____
Most furniture, except small pieces, are placed parallel to a wall	_____	_____	_____	_____
Television set is placed so screen does not face a window	_____	_____	_____	_____
Some free space is left in room for card tables, or children's play	_____	_____	_____	_____
Room has an important center of interest or focal point	_____	_____	_____	_____
	SCORE			
<b>For a small room</b>				
Most furniture is small in scale and visually lightweight in material	_____	_____	_____	_____
Furniture is arranged in compact groups	_____	_____	_____	_____
Heavy furniture is against walls	_____	_____	_____	_____
Most furniture is limited to that really needed	_____	_____	_____	_____
Multi-purpose furniture is used where possible	_____	_____	_____	_____
Space in some of the room is kept open	_____	_____	_____	_____
Some wall space is left free	_____	_____	_____	_____
Floor covering is wall-to-wall, preferably	_____	_____	_____	_____
Colors of wall and floor blend together	_____	_____	_____	_____
Colors of large furniture pieces blend with background	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mirrors are located on inside walls to reflect light and enlarge room	_____	_____	_____	_____
Informal balance is used in arranging furniture pieces	_____	_____	_____	_____
Storage pieces fit tightly together, or are built in	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wall lamps are used where feasible	_____	_____	_____	_____
Lighting is adequate to lighten the corners of the room	_____	_____	_____	_____
	SCORE			
<b>For a large room</b>				
Furniture is used to create space-breaking groups in room	_____	_____	_____	_____
Screens or other types of dividers are used	_____	_____	_____	_____
If large-scale furniture is used, smaller pieces complete the group	_____	_____	_____	_____
If an area rug is used, it is used with a furniture grouping	_____	_____	_____	_____
	SCORE			