


NEW HOMES & CONDOS


Double up your space with a combined sitting area and media room.



Consider splitting up a spare room into multiple spaces. Top two photos by Leni Johnston.

Spare rooms: A little change, big results



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THE DESIGN FEED

Do you have a spare room you're looking to put to good use? It's not always easy to decide how to spend that extra space without feeling like some is going to waste, so I've put together some design and planning tips for getting the most out of every inch of your spare square footage.

Double up

Since spare rooms are often used only half the time (or much less), it makes sense to double up on their function — as long as those functions don't overlap.

Combining a guest bedroom and office is a great option if you typically take a break from office work while guests are staying but not if you work from home absolutely every day.

Other ways to double up: a sitting area and media room (with swivel chairs that can face in or out); an office and dining room (go wireless with your tech so it can tuck away) or play room; and, TV room (so you can enjoy the space after the kids are in bed).

Divide and store

Another way a room can

serve double duty is by packing any unused space with storage, so the room is useful 24/7 — but you don't want an unruly mess. Add bookshelves to create a divider (with the backs facing into the large part of the room) and you can carve out a separate storage area so the room doesn't feel cluttered while you or a guest are resting in it.

This style of bookshelf wall makes an excellent headboard in a guest room (be sure to anchor the unit securely), or a place to hang whiteboards in an office for the ultimate in organization. You can also use this to create a small walk-in closet in your own bedroom, instantly!

Make a big move

If you can set aside a little renovation budget, you can often get BIG rewards by giving away spare square footage to other spaces. Simply moving a wall between an empty bedroom and the one adjacent can leave a more spacious master suite and a perfectly sized office or storage space.

If you're feeling more ambitious, consider splitting a spare room into multiple spaces. Try

expanding a nearby bathroom and creating a walk in closet, adding writing nooks to two bedrooms, or adding more storage to multiple rooms and the hallway.

Plan, plan ahead

Often when deciding what to do with a spare room (especially when construction could be involved), it's worth drawing a rough plan of that room in relation to the nearby spaces. It doesn't have to be perfect, or even to scale, but a master plan will help you visualize how the room relates to the adjacent areas, and how it could be repurposed.

Make sure to consult with a professional before you commit to any structural changes to make sure your plan doesn't involve any immovable walls. If it does, get creative!

A partial wall or column can be disguised with shelving, a handy full length mirror, or an inset display niche, turning an obstacle into part of a beautiful design.

Outside the box

Here's a few more mix-and-match uses for that square footage you may not have realized you need — until right now that is: a sauna (or room for a separate tub and walk in shower); grown-ups only chill-out space; media room (with pull down projector screen); sitting area (with beverage fridge or full cocktail bar); travel room (to stash luggage and display

memoros) home gym (save those membership fees!).

Got your own spare room story? Tweet or Instagram me @yanicsimard, and find more ideas and my Yanic Simard Selected accessory

collection at tidg.ca!

— *Yanic Simard is the principal designer of the award-winning Toronto Interior Design Group (tidg.ca) and regular TV design expert on CITY's Cityline.*



Combining a guest bedroom and office is a great option. Photo by Brandon Barre.

QUICK BITES

1. Double up functions that don't overlap so a room gets used all year round.
2. Use standing bookshelves to divide a room into storage and living areas, or create a walk-in closet.
3. Consider moving a wall to steal some space — expand a master suite while leaving space for a den.
4. Try splitting a room up altogether to create two new spaces, like a small office and walk-in closet or pantry.
5. Check with a pro to make sure walls can be moved, and get creative with the ones that can't!