TEN RULES OF INTERIOR DESIGN YOU MUST KNOW

The experts reveal their trade secrets to **Catherine Nikas-Boulos**

The world of interior design can be intimidating but with a few key rules at your disposal, you can start to bring your personal spaces together.

And once you know the rules, award-winning interior designer Greg Natale says you can break them, or at least bend them.

No rule is sacred for Greg, from the one that says not to match everything ("I love a well-co-ordinated, cohesive interior") to the suggestion that big patterns don't work in small rooms.

"The right consideration of pattern and the space means that wallpaper can add depth to a room and can even make it feel larger."

Here are a few more conventional ideas to set you on the right path.

Interior by The Designory.

WORK WITH SHAPES

If you are decorating a square room, make sure to add a round rug or coffee table to make that space feel more relaxed, comfortable and stylish.

Former Domayne interior designer, Adrianna Douelhy who now heads up business, A Designer's Life, says this is a no-brainer.

"I'm big on mixing things up," she says. "If you put too many geometric pieces in a room, it's going to feel off, so you have to mix it up. An assymetrical combination will make the space feel more balanced."

Interior by The Designory.

BUY BIG FIRST

Choose the biggest pieces of furniture first, says Adrianna. In the living room, start with the lounge, followed by side tables and then art work and other accessories.

Emily Hollier, senior designer at The Designory (formerly The Design Hunter), suggests another approach. Pieces that have a personal connection can be used as inspiration for the room.

"A beautiful brass lamp can be complemented with shades of grey and white with little pops of brass scattered around, while a personal artwork can be the basis of the colour palette.

"If you have a clean slate to work with, start with a beautiful rug," she says.

RESIST TRENDS

It's easy to get caught up in the latest interior design trends, but they can date very quickly if you're not careful.

Adrianna says you should always be involved in designing your own space.

"I might decide that blue is great calming colour, but not everyone will think that."

Emily says that you should always add something old to a room, that has sentimental meaning. "Adding pieces that mean something to you brings a new space to life. Your home should reflect the journey of your life, not just be a collection of beautiful new pieces."

Lights by Zaffero.

GET THE LIGHT RIGHT

Lighting is about experiences, says Adrianna. In the lounge room, go with side lamps to create different moods.

"Use the warm yellow of the downlights for dinner or watching TV, then put the lamps on when you have your girlfriends over."

Emily suggests using restraint with lighting, particularly overhead. Focus on what you want the light to do.

"A surface-mounted light on a bathroom vanity cabinet will create a warm glow to the face rather than harsh overhead lighting that will cause shadow."