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You can decorate baby's room to make sure it lasts a lifetime

Decorating the baby's room can be an exciting and creative experience, especially for new parents. But it's easy to forget the wee babe will quickly grow into an active toddler with very different needs.

If the nursery is decorated and furnished to simply meet the needs of a baby, it will soon become outgrown and unsuitable for the older child.

To avoid a needless expenditure of time and money, start by thinking in terms of flexibility and adaptability. This means forward-planning at the infant stage: remembering that you'll need to make room for a bed, more cupboard space, a desk and possibly a play area.

Last for years

The best, most economical arrangement will be one that can take care of the child's needs for the next 18 years. While this may be too much to hope for, there are ways of ensuring that some furnishings and decor last for many years.

The first step is to determine what the basic room will be. This means selecting a style of furniture — preferably simple, classic, contemporary or provincial — which will stand the test of time. Next, select the basic pieces carefully. They should be similar in style, durable and easy to add to.

The basic requirements in infancy, beside a crib, include a set of drawers, a diaper-changing/bath area, a nursing chair, a good light-resistant roller blind, and wall lights with a dimmer switch.

Once you have these components, you can incorporate any number of ideas with accessories, fabrics, floor and ceiling decorations, window treatments and room dividers.

Plan for storage space by selecting some durable roomy cupboards or a dresser. These will provide the basic framework to add other furnishings to.

The padded top of a roomy dresser or table can also double a diaper-changing surface.

This eliminates the need for a separate change table which will outlive its use within a few years.

If you must have a change table, try to select one that can be converted to storage space or another use later.

As well as practical, a baby's first room also needs to be bright and stimulating.

Careful planning in decorating will make it easy and inexpensive to adapt as the child grows. All small children respond to and are stimulated by colours.

Birds and animals

A nursery can be turned into an exciting, stimulating place for little eyes by using wall and window coverings depicting friendly birds and animals, rainbows, clouds or floral patterns. These can even follow a childhood theme such as Mother Goose or the Wizard of Oz or other fantasies.

The most practical and economical way to deal with walls is by painting them in white gloss.

These can be quickly cleaned with a damp cloth and make an excellent and durable backdrop for anything that goes on them. They also give you all the scope you need for choosing furniture, accessories and colourful decorations.

If you want to use wallpaper and borders, look for ones which are washable

or wipeable and that can withstand the smears of dirty hands and fingers. One way of getting the best of both worlds is by running a dado or chair rail around the room or a few walls at waist height. This way, you can give the upper and lower wall a different decorative treatment.

Attention to floor

Special attention should be given to the floor. After all, this where your child will be spending a lot of his/her time once they start to crawl. In the early years, the floor area should be left uncluttered and it should be reasonably warm, easy to clean, non-slip and not too hard.

The most versatile flooring is one which combines soft and hard areas. This is easily achieved by placing soft carpets over an existing hard floor. This mixture allows for a variety of activities such as sitting, reading and playing and makes maintenance and cleaning easier.

Windows can be treated in many ways.

The main consideration is that they should be safe and provide enough daylight and fresh air. Long curtains aren't good because they can be easily tugged and pulled down.

Blinds of one type or another are probably the best choice.

They're safe, easy to clean, and control light better than curtains. They also come in a wide variety of patterns and colours and can be easily dressed up with a valance.

But keep the cords well out of reach of toddlers and crawlers.

Finally, we can't forget the ceiling. This is the world the baby sees for much of the first year.

You can paint it with clouds, birds and butterflies, or even stars. You can also add another dimension by hanging things from the ceiling — mobiles, kites, paper lamps, balloons. Or, you can leave the walls plain and wallpaper the ceiling instead.

When making your decorating plans, just remember the best investment is one which can grow and change with your child at very little extra expense to you.

This article is provided by the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.



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How to be competitive in a free trade world

Canada is a major producer and consumer of energy.

Because of our cold climate, vast geography and industrial mix, per capita we consume more energy than our neighbours to the south and our other major trading partners.

In 1985, Canadian industry required on average 33 per cent more energy to produce a dollar's worth of output than the United States and about 2.5 times as much as Japan.

The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement will eliminate trade barriers in goods and services between our two countries. It offers Canadians a chance to grow and prosper in a competitive and dynamic economy.

So, how can businesses better compete in a free trade world?

One way is to make their companies more energy-efficient. If they cut their energy consumption they cut energy costs and lower energy costs can result

in more competitive product pricing.

Canadian companies engaged in energy efficiency research and development can currently receive financial support for their work under the Government of Canada's Industry Energy Research and Development Program (IERD).

Projects which have received support under the program include waste heat utilization, collection and combustion of waste gases, development of more efficient water heaters and large electric motors.

The reduction in trade barriers will be implemented gradually over 10 years, giving enough time for businesses and workers to adapt to the free trade environment.

Businesses interested in the IERD program can contact: IERD Secretariat, Energy, Mines and Resources, Canada, 580 Booth St., Ottawa, Ont., K1A 0E4; Telephone: (613) 996-2480 or (613) 996-6612.