



COURTESY JUNE SHEA STUDIO

Living in a small space doesn't mean you can only use apartment-size furniture, said James Wall, design principal for Residents: Understood. Make the room look proportional and it won't look cramped.

## Smart furniture arrangement creates interesting, inviting rooms

By Merlisa Lawrence Corbett  
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Proper furniture arrangement transforms individual pieces into a spectacular room the same way roses, sunflowers and lilies, artfully placed in a vase, become a gorgeous spring bouquet.

The trick is to begin with the right elements.

Scale, for example, is crucial in creating a room that works, said Lauren Liess of Lauren Liess Interiors in Herndon. "You can choose the most beautiful pieces that work together in style, color and texture, but if the proportions are off, the room won't work."

"Always scale the furniture for the size of the room," agreed June Shea of Shea Studio Interiors. "[Choose] small-scale furniture for a small-scale room, oversized furniture for an oversized room."

But just because you live in a small space it doesn't mean you can only use apartment-size furniture, said James Wall, design principal for Residents: Understood, an Arlington-based design firm.

Wall paired a full-size chaise sectional with smaller side chairs in a tiny condo. The room looks propor-



COURTESY KATHERINE HAUSCHKA

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tional without appearing cramped.

Sectionals may, however, leave fewer choices down the line.

"I am generally not in favor of sectionals as they limit the ability to change up the space in the future," Shea said. "In the right space they can look amazing but they are not for everyone, and the smaller the space, the less useful they are."

Liess said she likes to include a couple of occasional chairs along with sectionals to keep the space

feeling interesting. "Sectionals work best when the desired mood is casual," she added.

The shape of a sofa or sectional dictates what type of cocktail table to use and where to place it.

"If the space is tight, I will usually go with a round table so as not to have people bruising their shins every time they go to sit down," Shea said. "Is the arrangement of the sofas and chairs creating a square? If so, a round or square

### Resources

- » **June Shea Studio Interiors:** [sheastudio.com](http://sheastudio.com)
- » **James Wall:** [residentsunderstood.wordpress.com/](http://residentsunderstood.wordpress.com/)
- » **Lauren Liess:** [thepurestyle.com](http://thepurestyle.com)
- » **Belfort Furniture:** [belfortfurniture.com/roomplanner.aspx](http://belfortfurniture.com/roomplanner.aspx)
- » **West Elm:** [westelm.com/resources/related-articles/tillary.html](http://westelm.com/resources/related-articles/tillary.html)
- » **Ethan Allen:** [ethanallen.com](http://ethanallen.com)

space. And there's no rule that says they have to be paired. We could have selected one accent chair if it was scaled to fit the space."

Rooms should be balanced so there is enough space around pieces to walk comfortably. "Every seat should have a place to set a drink down next to it," Liess said. "Furniture pieces should be of varying heights to keep the room from feeling static."

Placing furniture on an angle works great in a very large room, said Shea, who added that "furniture can be floated in the middle of a space if large enough."

If floating a sofa, often the largest piece in the room, "it's always best to make sure there is a power supply in the floor so cords do not become a safety hazard when you add the tables and the lamps," Shea recommended.

Put a console with a pair of lamps behind floating sofas if possible, Liess said.

Still stuck? Some furniture stores, such as Belfort Furniture and Ethan Allen, have tools on their website that allow you to virtually arrange furniture. West Elm has one for sectionals called "Rearrange a Tillary," the name of its sectional product.

table or ottoman will work best. If a rectangle, then use an oval or a rectangle cocktail table or ottoman."

Mixing and matching can give a room personality and interest, so Wall has used a bench and traditional high-backed chairs in a dining room. "We encourage clients to have fun with their space, especially when it comes to accent chairs," he said.

Wall paired two round rattan chairs to add a touch of whimsy to a living room in an Arlington condo. "When selecting accent chairs, always consider their scale and proportion in relation to your