

Design Session Tools

Below are all of the tools that we have gone through so far in the Design Sessions. As we move through the Cliff House room by room I am going to highlight every tool I needed in the process of designing that specific room. Below are all of the Design Session tools (excluding Christmas) with the tools I used to design the Cliff House living room in bold.

Tool 1	The Key Principles of Accessorizing	Tool 17	Moulding and Wall Treatments
Tool 2	Budget Friendly Ways to Buy Accessories	Tool 18	How to Use Fabrics to Pull Things Together
Tool 3	How to Lay Out Your Furniture	Tool 19	Tile for Your Home
Tool 4	Tablescapes and Entertaining for the Fall Season	Tool 20	The Business of Built-Ins
Tool 5	Lighting a Home Perfectly	Tool 21	How to Refresh Your Home
Tool 6	Beautiful Window Treatments	Tool 22	All About the Flooring
Tool 7	Bedroom and Closet Decluttering	Tool 23	The Art of Stone Countertops
Tool 8	Accessorizing for the Spring Season	Tool 24	BONUS: Lighting Trick
Tool 9	Selecting Paint Colors for Your Home	Tool 25	Project Management
Tool 10	Selecting, Placing and Arranging Art	Tool 26	Discovering Your Design Style
Tool 11	Hanging and Placing Wall Decor (3D)	Tool 27	The Transitional Design Style
Tool 12	Furniture Arranging - How to Get it Right	Tool 28	Small Space Design
Tool 13	Tips for Area Rugs	Outdoor 1	How to Boost Your Curb Appeal
Tool 14	Tips for Beautiful Bedding	Outdoor 2	Outdoor Planting with a Pro
Tool 15	Accessorizing to Personalize Your Home	Outdoor 3	Outdoor Decorating Tips
Tool 16	How to Decorate with Throw Pillows	SketchUp	There are 11 Sessions detailing how to use SketchUp in "The Vault" section

The Design Process

Before we hop into designing, please make sure to [click here to sign up for the exclusive Design Sessions member email list!](#)

1. Assess the Situation (**Tool 25**)

The first step in any design process is to assess what you are working with. Take a hard look at your living room and try to answer the following questions:

- What are the issues?
- What are the challenges?
- What are the things you love about the room?
- What are the things you can't stand?

The Cliff House living room has a million-dollar view of the ocean that is breathtaking. Before I got my hands on this project, a couple of windows and bi-folding doors looked out at the ocean. When I saw the space for the first time, I instantly knew that to highlight the view I would install disappearing sliding glass doors on the entire back wall of the living room. The challenge of this living room would be getting enough furniture in the space to seat a good amount of people, but not too much that it distracted from the view. I also knew that I had to figure out a solution to create a symmetrical moment on the fireplace wall that ran all the way into the kitchen.

2. Create a Floorplan (**SketchUp Sessions**)

I am an avid user of the 3D modeling program, SketchUp Pro. I highly suggest watching the Sessions available to you as a Design Session member where I teach you the basics of this program. There are eleven Sessions all about SketchUp located in the "The Vault" section. If you don't want to deal with SketchUp, use graph paper, and start measuring!

Building a model of the Cliff House in SketchUp helped me visualize what the space could be before I called any contractors or bought any furniture. In my model, I designed the focal point wall with the fireplace in the living room and range in the kitchen. From my model I was also able to determine a proper furniture layout because I am able to see walkways, entrances and exit. This gives me a good idea of the sizes I can get for my furniture pieces.

3. Determine the Style (**Tool 26**)

Knowing the style you want your living room to be early on in the process is going to be helpful as you go to select stone (**Tool 23**), tile (**Tool 19**), and flooring (**Tool 22**). This is a great time to go window shopping to see what's new, what's speaking to you, and what's in your budget! Make sure to take photos and measurements, and always ask for samples to take home with you. These will be extremely helpful to you later on!

The living room and kitchen in the Cliff House were essentially one big room. To make both spaces cohesive, I selected hardscapes, colors, and finishes that were consistent throughout both spaces. I used the Quarzo Bianco stone on the wall with the range and the wall with the fireplace. On the columns throughout the entire home, I chose the silver eucalyptus I used on the kitchen cabinets.

4. **Pick Your Flooring (Tool 22)**

Flooring is a very important step in the design process. It covers a large percentage of the room so settling the right foundation is crucial.

In the Cliff House I chose a 8" hand rubbed plank of hardwood in a sandy color. This was perfect for minimizing the problem of sand from the beach. I ran this same flooring throughout the entire upper floor of the home.

5. **Select the Paint Color(s) (Tool 19) and/or Wallpaper (Tool 17)**

Most people choose their paint color and/or wallpaper first. BIG MISTAKE! You should go through the majority of the design process and then select your paint color and/or wallpaper. Why? Well, at this point you'll have chosen nearly every important item in the room. Now it is easy to layout all of your selections and choose a color that blends beautifully!

You are probably wondering why this step is occurring so soon in the design process if you're a longtime Design Session member! Well, in the living room of the Cliff House I broke my own rule of selecting wallpaper and paint color(s) as one of the last things you do when designing a space. Because I had already designed the kitchen, I carried carried the same wallpaper and paint color into the living room.

6. **Decide on the Furniture Layout (Tool 3 & Tool 12)**

Deciding how many pieces you need, where they go and how the traffic pattern is affected is super important not only to the finished result, but to the design process as well. This is where having a SketchUp model can be extremely useful. SketchUp is a to-scale model, so you will get a pretty good idea of the sizes of furniture pieces you can have.

You know me and samples... always ask for samples and always bring them with you when shopping for your space. I brought a sample of the suede chairs I selected in the kitchen when I went shopping for the living room furniture. I ended up finding a sofa that paired beautifully with the suede chairs. I custom-made the sofa to the exact size I wanted. I also came across a chair that initially I wasn't too fond of, but it was too comfortable to pass up! I changed the color of the chair to blend with the style of the room and knew I had to place it by the fireplace so people could see the details on the side and back as they walked past it. Finally, I found a coffee table that was the best of both worlds - half coffee table, half ottoman. Once I had the main components of the living room selected, I used these to guide the rest of the room.

7. **Select the Area Rug (Tool 13)**

An area rug can determine the entire look and feel of a room. I typically find an area rug that sparks inspiration and helps determine the color palette and style of the rest of the room.

I layered two area rugs in the living room of the Cliff House. Both area rugs were neutral and went well with the cabinets in the kitchen. One rug had a more intricate pattern to it, and the other was more toned down. I used the area rug with the pattern as the base and layered the muted rug on top of it.

8. Identify Lighting Locations and Select Fixtures (Tool 5)

With a solid furniture layout and the majority of the hardscapes selected, you can now identify where you will have lighting. The electricians are often the first sub-contractors in on a project. They will make a mess of the ceiling so it is best to get them in first. Be sure to think of your lighting as layering.

I found a light fixture with black leather straps in the same brass finish as the knobs and pulls I used in the kitchen. I knew it would look amazing over the console table behind the couch. Surprisingly this was the only light fixture I had in the living room! I made a lighting plan with canned lights that hit on all the appropriate areas of the room - the sofa, coffee table, fireplace, columns, etc.

9. Determine Where You Will Have Window Treatments (Tool 6)

When it comes to window treatments there are a few questions you should ask yourself: Do you need window treatments in your room? If so, stationary panels or traversing drapes? How high? How wide? Will they cover the walls or just the windows? Do you need privacy?

There was one window behind the sofa in the Cliff House where I would need window treatments. Because this window was on the same wall as the sliding glass door in the kitchen, I used the same neutral fabric with a laser-cut banded to the leading edge. For the sliding glass doors that looked out to the ocean, I had roller shades installed in the ceiling that dropped down at the click of a button in case my clients wanted less light coming in the room or some privacy.

10. Add Accent Pillows (Tool 16) and Accessorize (Tool 1 & Tool 15)

My absolute favorite step in the entire process! This is where you have the chance to pull everything together. Remember to repeat colors and finishes throughout. Add personal photos or collections to personalize your home with things that your family cherishes.

In the Cliff House, I mixed together different throw pillows that added to the calming, sea breeze color palette. On the coffee table I placed a couple accessories and a plant on top and coffee table books in the storage area at the bottom. In a niche by the front door, I designed an iron bookcase with cabinets below for storage. I used the open shelving to decorate with books, personal items from the clients and beachy elements like coral and seaglass.

11. Make Your Home a Smart Home

Of course if you want to get fancy make your home a smart home! This step adds to the ease of use, and you can control most everything in your home all in one place!

In the Cliff House we had all of the lights and electronics hooked up to one system so our clients could easily turn everything on or off right from their iPad!

NOTES

A series of horizontal lines for writing notes.