

# HOUSE RULES

t h e p o d c a s t

## **Episode 4: Filler or Foundational Furniture & 3 Pieces I'll Always Purchase**

I'm Myquillyn Smith and this is House Rules:  
Welcome to Episode 4.

When it comes to furniture, I've found I end up happiest with foundational pieces where I take my time figuring out what it is I really want. When I need a sofa or a bed, I'm patient. I know we'll use those types of pieces every day for hours a day, hopefully for years and years. I'm willing to pay good money and take my time to get it right.

But our rooms don't only need foundational furniture. They also need filler furniture.

By the end of this episode you'll understand the difference between filler and foundational furniture and why it matters. Along with three pieces of filler furniture I'm always open to buying on the spot.

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Chad and I were back in Charlotte for a few hours so we stopped in at my favorite place on earth to shop. The Depot at Gibson Mill in Concord, North Carolina. The Depot, as locals call it, is over 85,000 square feet of beautifully quirky, overwhelming curated booths by hundreds of different vendors. I found no less than 57 things that I wanted to own. Plus, we had recently moved to a bigger house and I actually needed some things and I had a budget! What exciting times!

In the past, this would have made me overwhelmed and unsure. I would have left with eight tiny items at the low risk price of \$14 each (that's about \$100 total if you are doing math). The problem is none of them would have made any type of visual or functional impact in my home. Now I shop differently.

First, I knew I wasn't looking for foundational pieces. Foundational pieces are the main pieces of furniture that are needed for every room to function at the basic level for the people who use the house on the daily. If you have a big family at home, you probably have a lot of foundational pieces. They are the sofa, the beds, the dresser that you open every morning and every night. They are the breakfast table, the favorite chair.

When I need a foundational piece of furniture for our home, like primary seating, this is what someone who lives in our home sits in daily, or a large case good like a dresser or a hutch, I will take my time and prepare and shop specifically for that piece.

If I'm out shopping for foundational furniture, I'm already armed with lots of information. I usually know really specific details of what exactly I need for the piece. If you're in the Cozy Community you know all about this and what to do before you step foot in the furniture store. Foundational furniture shopping is a whole different experience than filler furniture shopping. It's the difference between taking the SATs and doing a dot to dot worksheet.

Filler furniture is all pieces that might not get used daily, but they're seen daily and without them, your home can feel unfinished. With filler furniture, you can have a lot more fun. The pressure is off because these pieces are seen more than they are actually used. They are more about form (or the way they look) than function (and the way we use them). Although it's still important that they provide both.

Filler furniture can be the chairs in the dining room that flank the sideboard, the hall table whose main purpose is holding a pair of lamps and just looking pretty, the little bench at the end of your bed. They finish off a room, they provide some function if needed, and they look great.

Usually, before I even leave my house to go shopping, I've already identified if I'm looking for foundational or filler furniture. Shopping for them is very different. For most of us, if we're perusing HomeGoods or stopping in at our local antique mall for a quick look-see, we are not shopping for foundational pieces. This is a time to be open to filler furniture that helps complete your rooms.

I've learned to always be open to considering buying filler pieces when I happen upon them and that has served me really well. I'm able to quickly change up the look of a room or change the function of a corner just by switching out a few filler pieces. Filler pieces are adaptable and help me with the creative process. Even in our last house that was under 2000 square feet before we finished the basement, there were lots of opportunities to use filler furniture.

Today I want to share three filler pieces that I'm always open to purchasing.

**The first is small round pedestal tables.**

A pedestal table is a table that is held up by one center leg or pedestal, as opposed to a table that has 3 or 4 individual legs.

I didn't even realize my addiction to pedestal tables until a few months ago when an observant visitor pointed it out. She remarked on how many round pedestal tables I had and that she had never thought about using them in the ways I was using them. I was shocked. What? Do I use pedestal tables? But then I noticed.

Our breakfast table can hold two chairs up to six chairs due to the fact that it's a round pedestal table, it seems like you can always squeeze one more person around a round table as opposed to a table with corners. And a round table can easily fit into any shaped room. And without a bunch of legs in the way, there's more room for seating.

In my office instead of a desk, I have a round tulip style table. It's pretend marble on top with a skinny central leg that flares out near the top, then again at the bottom, so it has a really wide base. In my office I've got a daybed on one side, and a sofa on the other, and a random chair pulled up in between. The round table has room for stacks of books, computers, and it's the surface that's paired with the daybed, but it doesn't have corners to have to navigate.

Both of these tables are large 50-60 inches and honestly, they are foundational pieces for me. But using them in the two rooms, I became sold on their functionality. And looking back, I realize that was the beginning of my love with pedestal tables.

Now, I just went around and counted, I have seven more round pedestal tables in my house. They are so great, guys. They're all really small, like two maybe two and a half feet across, down to 12 inches.

There's a small black metal table with a shapely pedestal base next to the sofa that holds a plant. In our living room, we have a non working fireplace in an awkward spot at an angle, and it was perfect to layer a modern white pedestal table in front of it with a pair of swivel chairs. I liked that table so much that I purchased a twin in another color. That table ended up in my son's room. The previous owners had a window seat built and adding a pedestal table in front of the window seat on one side instantly added some function so there was a place to put a drink or a stack of books or when he's off at college I just style pretty.

I've got a marble top pedestal table from World Market, you've most likely seen it in someone's house. It's a perfect little size - sometimes I pull up two chairs around it, right now it's covered with a big beautiful piece of fabric which is actually a king size linen sheet. It creates, what growing up my mom used to call, a decorator's table. One of those round tables with a really full skirt, you can put photo frames or lamps on it. It's just a great surface to have.

Upstairs, my clawfoot tub sits, again, at an angle. I have lots of angles in my house. So, there's another awkward, empty corner behind my bathtub. Well, it was awkward until I added, you guessed it - a round pedestal table filled with plants.

Round pedestal tables are so useful! Because they are round, they fill up space, but they also provide visual softness because they only have round edges. Since they don't have a bunch of legs, it's easy to pull chairs around a pedestal table, if it's high enough, or if it's a smaller little table, you can usually scoot one next to a sofa, a fireplace, or a chair.

If I'm out and about and I see a small, round pedestal table in a finish that I love, and it's a good price, I'll buy it because I've learned they can always be worked into any room.

### **The second item I am always open to is the random chair.**

Now, there are different types of seating in your home. Remember, I said there are primary seats. These are the foundational seats in your home: the chairs and sofas that get used every single day. These seats need to be really functional, really comfortable and hopefully they are going to look great, too. I'm always willing to take my time and invest in primary seating.

But there are also secondary seats. Secondary seats are the pieces you need because you have friends and family and people in your life. When your neighbor stops by and chats with you in the family room, you are probably sitting in a primary seat like your main sofa or your favorite chair. And maybe she is sitting in a secondary seat, like the swivel chair in front of the fireplace. Secondary seats get used on the regular when people visit, a lot of times we buy them in pairs, we have to have them. But we're usually okay with them being a little less comfortable because no one is sitting in them for long periods of time.

Personally, if I'm purchasing a primary seat, I want to make sure I can sit in it before I buy. But if I'm purchasing secondary seating, I'm okay with majoring on the looks, because as long as a person can sit there for a while, that's all that matters.

There is one more level of seating that is pure joy and I believe every home needs. It's the random chair.

Random chairs are what you pull in from the hallway at Christmas. Random chairs spend most of their life empty, but when there's a crowd they're ready to serve. Random chairs can come in pairs, but I'm partial to a loaner, cool, unexpected chair tucked into the corner in case of seating emergencies.

I am always willing to purchase a random chair if I see one that suits my fancy. For me, a random chair is ideal if it has a small footprint, if it's made of an interesting material, if it isn't fully upholstered and if it's lightweight and easy to move around. Often, a random chair might have started its life with a twin or as a set, but now sits all alone at the antique mall, thrift store or yard sale.

I have random chairs at the ready all over the house. Next to the back door to hold my reusable grocery bags, pulled up to my office table, I'm actually sitting in one right now to record this.

Next to the front door where guests will often set their bags. At the top of the stairs. Tucked into the corner of a bedroom, you get the idea.

### **The last piece of furniture I'm always open to is the small stool.**

I'm not talking about a bar stool type of thing, but more of a chair height stool that could be upholstered with fabric in the form of a tiny ottoman, or something that resembles a table, but is more solid and chunky.

For me, the ideal small stool is about seat height, maybe about eighteen inches tall, lightweight because again, I want to be able to move it, it's flat on top so it can hold a drink, and hopefully it's sturdy enough to hold a person if needed.

A small stool can be easily moved from in front of the fireplace to the sofa to the chair in case you are eating a large piece of pizza and a salad and a drink and breadsticks and ice cream while watching your favorite movie and you need more surfaces. Small stools are at your service and instead of splurging on a sofa in your favorite offbeat color or pattern, small stools are a great way to add personality or test a color in your space.

A small stool could be a painted tree stump, a cool metal piece, a cube ottoman covered in fabric, maybe a ceramic garden stool that's drum shaped. The point is that it can be tucked in under a pedestal table or a console, or just in front of your sofa. It can be pushed around easily, and the top surface is ready to hold stuff.

So, back to my shopping day at The Depot, I didn't end up buying a bunch of smalls because even though I wasn't ready to invest in any primary foundational pieces that day, I found one of the most amazing random chairs I've ever come across. It's traditional because it's a classic shape with a history, but it's funky because it's made of metal. We lovingly refer to it as the electric chair. I'll share a photo of it in this Tuesday's email. It was less than \$100 which is my personal random chair threshold, that means I don't have to deeply consider and wonder if I should buy it. I've predecided if I can find a cool random chair that makes my heart skip a beat and it's less than \$100 I've already given myself permission to buy it immediately, without knowing exactly where it will go in my house.

As much as I think it's worth it to plan and invest in primary, foundational pieces for your home, I think it's just as valuable to be ready and prepared to bring in unexpected, one-off finds that can add a sense of soul, quirkiness, personal style and story that makes a room feel complete. Our rooms can use both foundational and filler furniture. By considering a few types of filler pieces that you find easy to tuck into any room, you'll be able to make better buying decisions when you're faced with a shop full of beautiful items.

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This is your personal invitation to join the 100,000 people already on my weekly Cozy Minimal email list.

You can expect pretty encouragement in your inbox every Tuesday, September through May. This Tuesday, I'll be sure to share the electric chair and some photos of my filler furniture in hopes that it can help inspire you to recognize what it is that you love. I hope to see you there.