

HOUSE RULES

t h e p o d c a s t

Episode 5: How to Know if it's Time to Get Rid of Furniture + Decor

I'm Myquillyn Smith and this is House Rules:
Welcome to Episode 5

Do you have a room that just doesn't feel right? For me, it's my dining room. This room looked finished and functional and even pretty. When we moved in, we inherited a statement chandelier and custom drapes from the previous owners. They also sold us a neutral bound rug and vintage dark wood dining table made by Drexel Heritage about five miles down the road from the house. When we moved in I had the movers place a large bench at the table that couldn't fit anywhere else in the house and it's been there ever since.

The room had a big patterned pink colored wall paper that was lovely, but not my style. So I had that neutralized and we painted the room white. But other than that, and some wall art, that's really all I did to the room. It's been over 15 years since we've had a dedicated dining room, and this one even has a fireplace! I'm so lucky. People like the room, we used it, but to me, it's been feeling all wrong. And every time I walk by it, I know that I need to make some changes.

By the end of today's episode you'll have three questions to ask yourself so you can better decide if it's time to let go of some furniture or decor in your home even if it's functional, pretty and served you well in the past.

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I have a decorating class on exactly how to work through any room of your house, and the secret is to make decorating decisions in the exact right order, which makes the process go so smooth, and it gets easier as you move through each phase. In the community we can upload photos, ask questions, get advice and encouragement.

It works for any style, any room and any budget.

One of the first decisions you need to make after you choose a room to focus on, is if your current pieces are working and if you need to change them out.

So I decided to work through the 5 phases for my dining room.

I was stuck at the beginning of phase one. And y'all, I teach the class. And by stuck, I mean this room has been bothering me since last year when we moved in up until last week when I finally made some hard decisions.

The problem was that my room seemed done, but I didn't like how it looked. It didn't feel like me and my style. My family room and living room feel 100% just like me. You may not like them, but I love them. And then I walk into my dining room, and well, t'aint right.

I realized that the only choices I personally made for that specific room was purchasing the table and rug along with choosing the paint color. The rest of the room was full of choices left from the previous owners – the drapes and the chandelier, and accidental items that I bought for other places in the house or maybe my last house that happened to work or fit in this room. And just things that landed there when we told the movers where to put stuff on moving day.

I didn't have big opinions about any of the pieces. I was grateful to have them, I didn't really hate any of them, they're all functional, each piece on its own was something I liked just fine.

So what was the problem? I was stumped.

One of the first steps of phase one of decorating is to decide on the purpose of the room. What activities need to happen there and for how many people? Well, in the past that question has prompted me to have to change up and upgrade pieces because I didn't have the right stuff for how we needed to use the room. This wasn't the case this time. It functioned, but I had to come to terms with the fact that the room as a whole just wasn't my style.

Part of the second phase of decorating is to quiet and arrange your seating surfaces and storage. As I quieted the room I was faced with the seating and the table – that's pretty much all that was left.

I was still in love with the table, so that was not in question at all. But I had to think about the seating. I had to evaluate it and I wasn't sure how, so I asked myself three questions and they made all the difference.

I started with the big upholstered bench. Let me tell you this is not some cute, little, tiny bench. This bench is huge. It's got a really tall back that's like four feet high, I think the bench itself is seven feet long, yes I said that. I purchased it for my tiny house – years ago I had a tiny house that we took on tour for my Cozy Minimalist Home book, and I needed a long, thin, tall seating to

act as a sofa in the space. I remember when I found it, I actually bought it at The Depot. This bench was perfect! It was such a relief to find it at the time, it was exactly what I needed, it served me so well. Plus, it's a neutral linen color, it can work anywhere! It still looks great, the bench came to my rescue and I loved the shape and scale of it. It made sense to me when we moved to a house with a big dining room to pair the bench with the big table. And they really did go together really great.

So I had to get to the root of the problem. And I asked myself this question:

1. Would I buy this bench today for full price?

Okay, gosh. I still LIKE the bench, but would I buy it today for full price? No, I would not.

Then I asked myself, would I buy it for this space for half of what I paid for it? And I knew the answer. No, would not buy it today for half.

Then I even asked myself what if it were on sale for 90% off? No. The answer is no, I would not buy this bench today for this room at all, even if it was 90% off.

Then I even went further. I was like, well what if someone called me and said they had this bench and all I had to do was drive over and pick it up. They would give it to me for free. I could have it. Astonishingly, my answer was no. I would not go to the trouble to get this bench for free today if I didn't already have it. Well, isn't that telling.

Those questions revealed a few reasons I was holding onto it.

That bench served me so well in the past, and it's hard to accept that it's no longer needed in the same way. I paid good money for it and it still looks great and "works". It still functions, you can still sit on it.

One of the reasons I was avoiding getting rid of it, is that it's just trouble, it's huge. I can't even move the bench by myself. But these questions helped me realize that it was time for the bench to move on. Even if I needed help to get that done.

I had a chaise lounge that I originally bought for a little enclosed side porch. The day it was delivered I tried it at the dining room table and loved it there, but now that I was quieting the room, I wanted to try it in the spot that I actually purchased it for. Turns out, I love it even more in it's intended place. So suddenly, I had zero chairs around my dining table. But that was ok.

Did I mention I quieted the room? This meant I took down art, the candlesticks, the stuff that was styled on a built in, pillows and drapes.

Speaking of drapes...

It was the late 1990's, at least 25 years ago and my husband had just taken a job as a bible teacher at a christian school. We were invited to the Christmas party hosted by one of the board members in Macon, Georgia. Y'all, southern women know how to decorate their southern homes.

For the first time ever in my life I was in the same room as custom drapes. I don't remember one thing about that party except for the fact that drapes could be gorgeous. Drapes could be breathtaking. Drapes could command attention. I was the weirdo hanging out with two windows and their drapes in a dining room all night long. I quietly inspected them. They were heavy and had three or four layers of material, what was this? Why? I had never seen this. I didn't know this existed! They had fringe on the edges, every detail was perfect, they were the exact right measurement so they just barely skimmed the floor. They were hemmed with a heavy large perfectly pressed fold at the bottom, they were a miracle.

These drapes were gorgeous. Jesus deserves drapes like this in a heavenly mansion. To no one in particular, I remember stating that it was like the windows were wearing prom dresses. That night, my love affair with luxurious, opulent, full, heavy custom-made drapes began.

Over time, I learned more about window treatments and the process of having custom drapes made. The attention to detail and materials used on custom drapes and window treatments set the cost at a price point that was out of reach for me. So I learned to create what I jokingly, lovingly called window mistreatments. With hot glue and upholstery tacks. They served me well and over the years I upgraded to ikea drapes and amazon drapes and I learned the magic power that drapes hung correctly would have in a room. Drapes are worth the trouble.

Then last year when we toured this house, when it was for sale, there they were. In the dining room. A pair of custom drapes, felted, weighted, lined, beautifully crafted and hemmed, pleated in a luxurious fabric. Custom window treatments. Prom dresses for the windows straight from a heavenly mansion.

We closed on the house and I was excited to finally have custom drapes in one room for the first time in my life. They were even almost a perfect match for the color that's become one of, what I consider, my personal neutral colors. A color that I tend to work into all of my homes which is a muddy, bluish green.

As we moved into the house and I had the dining room walls neutralized from pink wallpaper to white paint, I realized the color of the drapes had a much cooler temperature compared to the green-blue I was drawn to. Not no matter, the drapes were gorgeous. They were expensive and custom and I am up for the challenge! If anyone can make them work I can!

So for a year, I tried. I added chunky rustic fringe to the edges to try to bring their formalness down a notch and warm up the cool color. I added more warm tones to the room. But no matter what the room felt off.

This leads me to the next question to ask yourself if you are considering if it's time to remove an item from a room.

2. How big of an impact does this item have in the space?

A pillow on the sofa has a smaller visual impact than if you had purple walls in your room. If you need a change in a room and you're considering what needs changing, it's helpful to identify the most visually significant items in the room and evaluate those first. Is the item in question bossing the entire space? Is it one of the main characters in the room? Do most people notice it right away? Is it large or in a significant location or calling attention to itself because of its pattern, color or style? The bigger impact something has on the space, the more power it has over whether or not you'll like the overall look of the room. And the more important it is to get right.

So in the case of my drapes, they were on the main wall of the dining room. My dining room has three openings and even when you walk into the front door of our house, you can see through the living room into the dining room and you are looking right at the gorgeous cool color blue drapes. The drapes were everywhere I looked with their almost perfect color. They were bossing the way I felt in three rooms of my house: the dining room, living room and hall. Because I had a clear view of the drapes from each of these rooms, it was hard for me to realize what was wrong because they were so close to being right. And did I mention they were custom, heavy and gorgeous?

I realized that these drapes were the boss of my room. And when it comes to a room boss, you have to respect it. You can work with your boss, you can change your boss, but you don't get to ignore your boss. I could no longer ignore that this color was not a color that I would choose to have in my house. It was close but it wasn't it. This color made me feel cold.

Which led me to asking the third question. So if you might need to remove something from your room, consider this:

3. Ask yourself if you can practice editing out the item?

If there's something in your space you think is having more than its share of visual impact and you aren't sure you like it, find a way to move it out, take it down, cover it up or neutralize it so you can make a better decision.

This is a way to experience the reward before you invest in 100% of the work. It's visual proof that you're doing the right thing. Baby step your way to a confident decision.

For my dining room, I asked my boys to move the bench, but just to the kitchen. Was it in our way? You better believe it. Was it worth it? Immensely and immediately. Without the bench I could see the carved legs of the table again. I remembered that was one of the things I loved about it. The bulky bench had been blocking those carved legs all of this time. Plus, the bench

was the same color as my rug, there was no contrast there and it took up lots of room without adding interest.

I had so much space now that the bench was out. I somehow had enough space to add a sideboard. Oh my gosh, I can have storage?! The bench always had to be pulled out away from the table because it was too large to be pushed in and out, over and over again. Plus the back was slanted so it took up a lot of depth in the room. I grabbed a few chairs from our breakfast table and pushed them under the dining table to test and confirmed that yes, without Gigantor the Bench, I could have chairs and a storage piece!

Instead of telling myself I had to get rid of drapes as part of quieting in phase two, I simply took them down and put them on the sofa in another room. I needed to see the room without the drapes. The room instantly warmed up. I have a lot of experience moving things in and out of rooms and so many times I am shocked at the difference removing something can make. Even with white walls, without those cool blue drapes, my room felt warmer! My room was communicating with me and I was doing my best to pay attention. I'm currently halfway done with Phase 2, being sure to not work ahead. And once again, I'm amazed and assured that making decorating decisions in the right order is the most effective way to decorate any and every room, even when a room already looks okay. Understanding the order of decor helped me understand myself, my style and be confident in what to change.

There are a million reasons why it can be hard to edit stuff out of our homes, but often it's the secret ingredient to change.

Not editing can keep us stuck.

Editing, choosing to make a change gives us motivation, visual proof and options, and is often the push we need to make great changes.

Maybe you have some items in a room that need to be reconsidered. Here are those questions again that I asked myself that might help you too:

- 1. Would I buy this exact thing again today for full price?
Or half price? Or free?**
- 2. How much of an impact does this item have on the room as a whole?**
- 3. Can I practice (or test) editing it out?**

Creating a beautiful and functional home isn't a one and done endeavor. Even if you never move to a different house, people change, needs change, kids grow up, and you're allowed to change what you like. Your home is there to serve you.

There's a quote by Scott Adams that reads "Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Design is knowing which ones to keep." I love that, but I like my version even more:

Creativity is allowing yourself to make changes. Design is knowing which ones to keep.

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If you have a room that feels stuck, unfinished or maybe like mine you can't even put your finger on what's going on with it. I promise, making decorating decisions in the right order will help you figure it out. And you don't have to have an empty room and a full budget to begin. You can start wherever you are.

You don't need to wait for better circumstances. You can make a beautiful difference in your home right now. Join me in the 5 Phase Decorating Class and Cozy Minimalist Community and let's finally finish your home together.