

# HOUSE RULES

## Episode 18: What Designers Don't Know They Know

I'm Myquillyn Smith and this is House Rules  
Welcome to Episode 18

In his book, *Adorning the Dark*, [@andrewpetersonmusic](#) gives ten tips to songwriting that magically apply to almost all creative endeavors.

One of his tips is: Don't obsess over the perfect rhyme.

He says some songs end up better because they don't rhyme. But it's the job of the writer to make sure if they are sacrificing rhyme, that the end result makes a better song as a whole.

He ends with these words: "You have to earn the right to break the rules".

This is exactly how we should approach design and decorating rules, or what I like to call Universal Decorating Truths.

You and I? We can break the rules too. We SHOULD break the rules! But we have to earn the right to break the rules.

I don't want us to break the rules because we don't know better, we need to break the rules of decorating because we believe our house will be better.

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When I was in elementary school I dreaded Fridays. Everyone around me rejoiced about TGIF, but not me, because it was the day of the spelling test.

I wasn't good at spelling. I'm still not. The problem was, I believed the purpose of the test was to find out what I already knew, not to encourage me to learn. At first I didn't realize that we were allowed, much less encouraged to study the spelling words! Wasn't that like cheating?! You either knew the words or you didn't. I didn't.

Over the years some kind teachers taught me that the whole purpose of the test was to give us motivation to learn how to spell new words. Learning could even be fun. There were little sayings and rhymes like, "I before E except after C" that helped. I learned that none of my friends were born knowing how to spell words. They learned over time, too.

Of course, it's the same with lots of skills. Even decorating.

Decorating is a skill you can learn and I promise, Martha Steward did not come out of the womb pointing at a marble countertop and calling it a "Good Thing". Some people might seem like they were born with lots of knowledge but the truth is, most of the time they're usually just passionate about a subject from a young age and start practicing, learning from their mistakes before most of us are paying attention. That means they naturally stumble upon the rules of their passion, paying attention to what happens when they apply, bend and break them, before you and I even know those rules exist. They might not even be able to put the rules into words, because following and breaking them often has been a part of their life for so long, they seem to just naturally know exactly what to do in their field of genius.

So if they're into plants or gardening, we say they have a green thumb. Or when it comes to decorating, we laugh and say they were born with a decorating gene. And poor us, we weren't. Oh well. No pretty house for us.

NOPE. I am your bossy big sister and you are listening today because you trust me enough to tell you when you've been lied to.

There is no such thing as a decorating gene.

There is no such thing as someone born knowing how to spell. They just learned the universal rules earlier than others.

If you want to spell lots of words correctly you learn rules like, "I before E except after C." It applies whether you are writing an Instagram post, a Mother's Day card or filling out a job application.

In the same way, if you want to decorate better, and make more confident decisions, there are universal decorating truths that apply to your home no matter your style, budget or type of home you live in, they are proven rules that just work. And professional designers already know these rules because they've been mindlessly obeying them for years without even thinking about them.

It's time all these rules were gathered in one place so the rest of us can learn the tricks that the designers are doing in their head without even realizing. That's why I wrote my latest book: House Rules: How to Decorate for Every Home, Style and Budget.

I can teach you how to make better decorating decisions with confidence. And you'll just get better and better the more you practice.

It's one thing to see a pretty photo of a room and know you like how it looks. It's a completely different thing to look up at your own room and wonder why, even though you've chosen every item in there, you don't love it. Where do you begin? How do you know what changes to focus on and what not to worry about?

When you get a new appliance you can turn to the back of the manual where there's a troubleshooting area. It explains that if the light won't stop blinking, it's probably not broken and could be caused by one of four things. Think of House Rules as your manual for home: these rules and tips guide you in how to troubleshoot. Don't like your family room? That's more common than you think. The book guides you through 100 universal decorating truths that will help you see what you're missing.

Decorating is a skill you can learn.

People often think that the skill is picking out a room full of new, stylish items that function great and look beautiful together without making any mistakes. The secret is that the *actual* skill is understanding what to do when a roomful of stuff DOESN'T look good together.

Now what?

That's where the House Rules book meets you. I want to help you figure out what to do when you're in a real room in a real house that isn't perfect, when you can't buy all new stuff and you're faced with a bunch of decisions. That's what I love to do.

Why is it that in your last house the art over your mantle looked amazing, but when you moved the same piece of art suddenly looks hideous? Why do you love the rug in the store and hate it on your floor? Why do you love every individual item on your coffee table but together they look like a weird circus?

Everything in your room is in a relationship together. For decades I've been obsessed with why some things look good together and others look weird. I've moved 15 times and had a bunch of practice and my unscientific research is ready for you in a beautiful book full of memorable house rules paired with images that show each house rule applied in my home.

House Rules is not a book full of aspirational photos. I LOVE books like that and I want them all forever. But sometimes you need a guide book. House Rules is like if there were a fun decorating school that you didn't have to leave your house for and your best friend was the professor.

This is not a style book or style class. I don't expect you to love my style, I expect you to love YOUR style. I'm not an influencer you can imitate. I'm teaching a mindset you can model. I love my home and make confident decorating decisions and I can help you do the same.

I'm your professor and school starts now. Although the House Rules book doesn't release until April 23, if you preorder it before its release I've got a few thank you gifts to help you start thinking differently about your home.

The first thank you gift is a brand new masterclass available right now, free when you preorder. I invited a video crew to my home to film a new masterclass for you called House Rules in Action. I walk you through nine rooms of my house and share how different house rules helped me solve real problems and make actual decisions in my home. You already know my home isn't perfect and I don't have an unlimited budget. I'll show you exactly how some of my favorite house rules gave me confidence to spend my money in the right places and know what not to worry about as I decorated the home we bought less than 2 years ago.

I've never shared my home like this before and I'm excited to invite you in. You can watch the entire masterclass in less than an hour, with your kids, on your TV if you'd like. If you've ever taken a class I created, you know how passionate I am about teaching. Classes are my favorite thing to get to create and this is hands down the best class I've ever made. And it's so enjoyable to watch, you will love it and learn from it.

To claim your free masterclass, simply preorder the House Rules book right now from any retailer, in any country. And of course any version counts. BUT wait, there's more—I've always wanted to say that and mean it—because of the popularity of this, the House Rules podcast and the generosity of my publisher, Revell, as a thank you gift for preordering House Rules you will also receive the Audio Version of the book FREE. Now, because it's technically a version of the book it's not available just yet, information on how to claim the audiobook will be emailed to you the week the book releases, that's April 23rd.

YES, I do know what a big deal this is. I promise you want this book in your hands, and on your coffee table, and I'd love to be the voice in your head with the audio version so I can read the house rules to you as you go about your day.

Here's how it works. Preorder House Rules before April 23rd (yes, this counts even if you preordered last year—thank you for that!). There's a link in the show notes to [thenester.com/houserules](https://thenester.com/houserules) where you can get links to different retailers. Once you pre order, grab your order number from your receipt and go back to that original link to CLAIM your free gifts.

Your retailer doesn't know me and can't get your thank you gifts for you, you've GOT to claim them before April 23rd. You'll enter your info and within 10 minutes or so you'll get access to the House Rules in Action Masterclass that you can watch today.

Then, when the book launches on April 23rd, watch for an email from us to claim your free audio book. It's that easy.

Let's learn the rules, then break them beautifully.