

HOUSE RULES

Episode 27: The House Rule Husbands Hate

I'm Myquillyn Smith and this is House Rules.
Welcome to Episode 27.

There's a Twitter post by Margaret Lyons that says, "Women's magazines really convinced me that 'going from day to night' was going to be a big part of my adult life," but so far it has not come up.

It's true! It seemed like every issue had suggestions for how to seamlessly switch out a few items from your business casual pencil skirt and blouse to make you ready for a romantic dinner and dancing the night away.

I don't know about you, but I even had a Day to Night Barbie. She came dressed in a no nonsense, double breasted, pink business suit – skirted of course. The outfit came complete with a hat that resembled something a circus carnival game host would wear and my favorite accessory: the pink and white plastic briefcase.

However, once it hit 5 o'clock, Barbie simply needed to remove her jacket exposing the sequined bodysuit and reverse her skirt and tada: it was fancy tulle!

I couldn't wait to grow up and solve the problem of going from day to night just like this!

It turns out this was a problem I've yet to have.

I've realized it's the same with home, sometimes we worry about solving the wrong problems.

By the end of today's episode you'll know one simple trade off that will actually impact how your home looks and functions: it's a problem worth solving.

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I started writing about home and decorating online in 2007. For some reason one of the hottest topics of that time was women everywhere wondering how exactly to decorate the tops of their cabinets. You see kids, this was at a time in history where almost no cabinets reached the ceiling, so many of us had a big gap between the top of the cabinet and the ceiling and some of us felt compelled to fill it up.

What's a woman to do? Everyone wanted advice on what exactly to put up there and it wasn't popular for me to tell them my opinion.

Even now, sometimes someone will reach out to me in a panic about which metal finish to incorporate with their photo frames or which specific pillow pattern is absolutely perfect. I've been shopping with people who spend time agonizing over which 5 inch vase to buy for their home. And y'all, I've been that person!

The thing is, when you understand the order of decor, focusing on priority pieces and making your decorating decisions in the right order, you often find that your room as a whole feels complete and finished before you even get to those smaller items. Those areas we thought needed attention often don't matter because the most important areas are addressed in a beautiful functional way.

So when I'm asked about a specific pillow pattern, a tiny metal decision or even over the cabinet decor, I know that's never the make or break decision in a home. It's the equivalent of deciding which stud earrings to wear with your outfit. Pick your preference because everyone is going to be noticing the jeans, shirt, and shoes – those are the pieces that matter most.

The truth is, if you get your surfaces, seating and storage in, and your homey trinity: the right size rugs, drapes hung correctly and layered lighting, your room is 80% done. If you love your room at that point, a little frame or pillow is just a fun addition and doesn't carry the weight of the entire room style on its shoulders.

If you like your kitchen, then decorating above your cabinets is just a cherry on top. If you don't like your kitchen decorating the top of your cabinets probably isn't going to help that much. I'm not saying I hate top of the cabinet decor, I'm just saying it's personal preference and doesn't solve any real decorating issues.

Accessories are added in step 5 of the order of decor and, although I LOVE THEM, they are less impactful than choosing the right sofa, or rug, or drapes or a wall treatment. If you want to learn more about the order of decor you're going to LOVE my private group called the Cozy Minimalist Community. You can join now for just \$10 a month, get my 5 step Order of Decor class, weekly teachings and a group where you can upload photos and all of that kind of stuff. It will be the best \$10 you spend on your home.

Now that I've bossed you on what doesn't matter quite as much, I want to boss you on something that actually can make a difference.

Sometimes I'll walk through my house and suddenly realize there's a bunch of stuff sitting out, having a visual impact on my home in a way that I never intended. I've become blind to it all because it's been there for so long.

Next to the kitchen sink there's an assaulting color of dish liquid packed in a glaring little advertisement next to brightly colored sponges and dish towels that look like they've been picked out by someone who's never even met me. The box of donations by the back door has been collecting dust for weeks, and the Kleenex box is demanding attention with its obnoxious pattern. I've spent all this time and effort creating a cohesive, visually beautiful home, but there are a bunch of functional items sitting out and having a say on the overall look and feel of it.

The truth is, everything that sits out in your home is a decoration.

Whether we admit it or not, when an item is out on display, we are decorating with it, and it either enhances or takes away from the overall visual experience.

If I'm going to have tissues sitting out in my family room 365 days a year, I want to make mine pretty, so I'll look for the pretty covers that work with my style. If soaps and scrubbers that I look at and use multiple times a day are front and center in my kitchen, well then, make mine pretty. Let's elevate that experience. Guess what? It doesn't even cost more to buy a pretty dishrag versus one in a crazy color.

This rule has, well it's convicted me many times, and I call it the "house rule husbands hate" because it's an easy one to point out to others and let them know why their work boots can't permanently live in the foyer or why the fishing magazines don't need to live on the coffee table every day of the year. But the truth is, I'm the person in my house who breaks this rule more than anyone else.

I'm more apt to declutter if I have a space near the back door dedicated for donations. Great! But instead of living the rest of my life with a ripped Amazon box as "floor decor" that I look at twenty-seven times a day, I can pay attention to the fact that I need something to function there instead. I choose to believe it's worth it to upgrade the visual experience. So I'll find a pretty lidded basket for my donation station.

I LOVE this part of creating a beautiful, functional home. I've also learned that when I upgrade those functional items to prettier options, they serve as decor. And surprisingly, my house needs less stuff!

Because everything that sits out in your home is technically a decoration, invest in pretty everyday items that don't fight against or clash with your existing decor. If you have to look at it, why not make it beautiful and functional? If it sits out, make it stand out.

This one tip changed how I invested in smalls for my home. Instead of fretting over the details of pretty tchotchkes, I focused on upgrading my everyday functional items that I had to have and use no matter what. It's a great problem to solve that feels like the grown up way to approach elevating your everyday experience in your home.

Now I pay attention to what I use daily.

I want the pretty pepper mill, salt cellar and olive oil dispenser.

I have leather kleenex covers for our tissue boxes, I make sure my dish soap container is something I like to look at. I even look for beautiful, natural scrubbers and sponges.

I've got a pretty box to hold the remote and my chapstick, and when I was buying my new coffee milk frother, I of course picked the one that looked great in my kitchen. It usually doesn't cost much more, if anything, to be mindful of the daily objects that we use, it's just fun to pay attention.

I want my kitchen towels to be LOVELY, my pens and pen holder to be exquisite, and my tray to hold my glasses to be quirky and interesting.

I found my copper watering can and metal plant sprayers at an antique mall – I see plastic ones for the same price at the big box stores.

When it comes to choosing those small pieces, focus on the function and choose the items that are beautiful and add to the overall look you love for your home.

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Today's episode featured House Rule number 66: If it sits out it's a decoration. The House Rules book is available everywhere books are sold. And The Cozy Minimalist Community is now open, see the link in the show notes to join us.