

How to Hang Art

WALLSCAPING

There is an art to hanging art. The design principles come into play when arranging artwork. Proportion, rhythm, and scale need to be well thought out to achieve a pleasing end result.

Proportion: How can you tell if your artwork is the proper size for the room? Squint your eyes. Does the artwork seem too small or too large for the wall on which it is hanging? When you narrow your eyes, elements that are out of proportion will become glaringly apparent.

A good rule of thumb to ensure proper proportion when hanging art above furniture is to keep your artwork within the width of the furniture it is hanging over. A painting above a buffet that is several inches larger than the width of the buffet throws the balance of both pieces off. The painting will visually topple over the buffet. The buffet will be dwarfed. An exception to this rule would be a using a mural, a very large piece of art or collection of works of art together to compose an arrangement. When in doubt, it is best to stay within the width of your furniture.

Rhythm: Art can help you balance the visual weight of your furniture or other competing dominant elements. Your eye can stop on those elements because of their sheer size. Artwork creates rhythm, allowing your eye to flow from one point of the room to the next, without stopping on one dominant element.

Scale: I have found that a sizeable piece of artwork hung in a small room will enlarge the space.



Designer secret: When creating a gallery wall using more than one piece of art, a helpful technique is to cut out butcher-paper patterns the size of your artwork and position them on the wall with blue painter's tape. That way you can get a visual idea of how your composition will look and make any changes in the arrangement before you pound any holes in the wall.

A mix of odd numbers -- three, five or seven pieces of art hung together can create a great deal of interest on an otherwise boring wall.

Hanging art from floor to ceiling will draw the eye up and make the ceiling seem higher. To add extra interest, I like to incorporate three-dimensional pieces along with artwork on a large wall that needs to be filled — a pair of wall-mounted iron and glass sconces that hold big chunky candles paired with three paintings, two paintings hung side by side and the third painting hung on top with the candle sconces on each side of the two paintings hung side by side.

A rustic antique corbel with a decorative plate perched atop adds another layer, lending even greater appeal to a wall hung with framed artwork. A round decorative mirror hung in the center of a wall over a sofa with six smaller paintings or prints hung around it is a real attention-getter. Paintings or prints are not the only scene stealers. A colorful rug can be used as a wall hanging over the balcony of a second-story stairwell. Hang a carved goose from the ceiling in the corner of a den.

I decided to start a fish theme on our houseboat. I contacted a metal artist to make this wire sculpture of a salmon to hang over our fireplace.

Hanging tip: For large pieces of art use two hooks. If you have a heavy piece you'll want to find a stud to secure your artwork. Use your imagination and experiment. You can always spackle and paint if you get it wrong the first time.

Artwork can be hung in more ways than I can describe. For solutions to hanging art, pick up the book "The Fine Art of Wall Design by Suzanne Gallagher." I had the privilege of being a featured designer in her book on how to hang art.

Art is the soul of your home . . . give it your full focus, and you will be richly rewarded with many years of viewing pleasure.

Happy hanging!
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