

Seating, space key when choosing a dining table

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Whether throwing a dinner party for close friends or sitting down for a family meal, many lasting memories are created at the dining table. Choosing the right table for your dining room will depend on many factors, including the number of people you plan to seat, how often you entertain, the size of your space and whether you want a casual or more formal dining experience. Here are some tips for selecting the perfect dining table for your home.

1 Opt for flexibility. The first question you need to ask when selecting a dining table is how many people you want to comfortably seat on a regular basis, says interior designer Linda Nolan. If you often host family gatherings, you may want a table that allows for flexibility. Many tables have leaves that hide inside when not being used, allowing for extra seating when company comes over.

2 Match shapes. The size of the room helps determine both the size and shape of your dining table. A round table is best suited for a square dining room, says Nolan, while a rectangular table looks best in a long, narrow dining space. To determine fit, Nolan recommends a minimum clearance of about a metre all around the table to allow people and chairs to move in and out.

To add character to your dining room, choose a table with rounded edges or an interesting pedestal base. "Detailing and craftsmanship can help to dress a space," says Nolan.

3 Create your own set. The days of purchasing a dining table and six-chair set have gone by the wayside as homeowners have become more design savvy. Buying pieces separately is a great way to give the room an eclectic feel and create interest. Nolan enjoys playing with different design fabrics and says fully upholstered dining chairs have become very popular, allowing homeowners to completely change the look and feel of the dining room by simply swapping fabrics.

4 Contrast with chair fabrics. Pairing dark chairs with a lightcoloured or glass table, or lightcoloured chairs with a dark mahogany table is a great way to create drama in the dining room. To add even more interest, Nolan recommends choosing chairs that complement each other but don't necessarily match.

"You can put two armchairs at both ends of the table and then two or four side chairs. The side chairs will be matching, but the chairs at the end will be mismatched," she says.

5 Consider chair height. When buying chairs, measure the height of arms to make sure they slide nicely underneath the table and measure seat height to ensure there's enough room for crossing legs. Chair-back height is also important to consider. While lowback chairs can create a breezy feel and make a small room look larger, high-back chairs can help create division, sectioning off the dining room from a living area or kitchen.