

Before you buy: Choosing a flat-screen TV

BY LISA EVANS, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN January 9, 2014



If you're hanging the TV above the fireplace, the scale should match, with the TV width no wider than the fireplace unit. Photograph by: JULIE OLIVER, OTTAWA CITIZEN

OTTAWA — A family room staple, the size of the TV is often a source of disagreement and largely depends on whether the man or woman of the house is making the decision. But, ultimately, screen size should depend on a number of factors, says interior designer Linda Nolan, including how far away you're sitting and where the TV is in the room. Here are four things to consider when choosing a new TV.

1. Measure the entertainment centre. Flat-screen TV dimensions are deceptive as they're not reflective of the width, but are measured from corner to corner. Be sure to measure the height and width of your entertainment centre, allowing a few centimetres on the sides for easy installation of rear panel audio/visual connections.

If you're hanging the TV above the fireplace, the scale should match, says Nolan, with the TV width no wider than the fireplace unit.

2. Determine a comfortable seating distance. You may have a large wall that can accommodate a 70-inch screen, but if your living room is very narrow, you'll be better off with a smaller set. Roger Delarosbil, manager

at Signature Audio Video, says the distance from the TV to seating is calculated as 2.5 times the height of the TV.

“Because of our eye shape, we’re more sensitive to the height, not the width (of an object),” he says. This is why you might get a headache if you’re sitting too close to a large TV.

While a 40- to 50-inch TV will fit comfortably in a condo where seating is two to 2.5 metres away, a typical family room where seating is four metres away can easily accommodate a 60- to 70-inch TV.

3. Determine its purpose. Gone are the days when TVs were only for watching movies and weekly shows. Smart TVs are now acting as computer monitors and video phones. The problem, according to Delarosbil, is that larger TVs may not be the best fit for these situations.

“If you’re streaming content from YouTube and it’s not high definition, the image is going to be really noisy,” he says, recommending a smaller 46- to 55-inch screen to allow for a tighter picture.

4. Camouflage your TV. Although most guys may argue the TV should be the focal point of the room, women tend to disagree and want to hide the big black box. To avoid the TV becoming the centre of attention, Nolan recommends placing it against a dark wall.

“When the screen is off, the TV is black. If you put a black TV against a very light-coloured wall, it’s obviously going to pop because it’s going to be high contrast. But if you put the TV against a dark wall, it’s going to blend in a lot more.”

Hiding the TV behind panelled doors when it’s not in use or flanking it with bookcases filled with decorative objects to balance out the weight of the big screen can reduce its dominance in the living space.