

Reduce noise, stress levels by decorating

(AP) — Garbage truck or lawn mower, a neighbor's TV or your kids' stereo, the hum of an air conditioner or clothes dryer, it's a noisy world. But if you feather your nest just so, you can live in relative tranquility.

The goal is to stop the offending sound as close to the source as possible, says designer Nina Hughes.

If the noise is coming from the next room, the goal is to contain it, she says. When the din is outdoors, then windows, doors and exterior walls are the main points of defense.

Hughes sometimes builds a room within a room by erecting walls an inch or so from existing walls. It's the air space between the walls, rather than the new wall, that creates the sound barrier. It works to keep sound in as well as to keep sound out, so she recommends it for musicians who must practice many hours.

To cut down on outdoor noises, consider storm windows and sound-absorbing draperies. The more layers you use, the more the incoming sound will be muffled, says Richard Harary, owner of Richard's Interior Design in Greenwich, Conn.

He suggests extending decorative window treatments beyond the window edges and to put special acoustic lining in draperies and roman shades. The linings, available to home sewers and in custom window treatments, include a synthetic material by Roe-Lon, about \$9 a yard, and a

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flannel interlining, about \$9 a yard.

If window dressing isn't enough, consider upholstering the wall. Usually, Hughes says, a layer of Dacron or cotton batting goes next to the wall with a face fabric stretched over it and tacked to wood furring strips. The fabric should be woven loosely enough to allow sound waves to get through. The batting keeps them from bouncing back into the room.

While far from cheap, fabric-covered walls are competitive in cost with traditional wallcoverings in medium and better grades, Harary says. The treatment is also decorative. Harary finds it's particularly effective both visually and acoustically for the wall behind the bed.

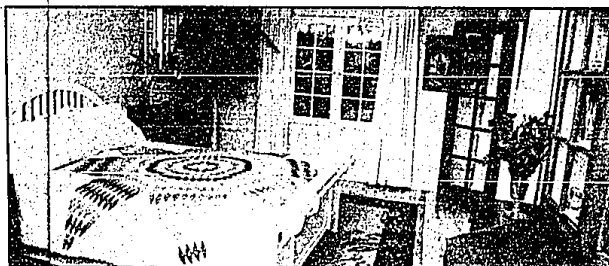
If even the slightest noise seems to reverberate in your living space, you may have too many hard surfaces: wood, stone or brick floors; plaster walls; shuttered windows. Sound waves bounce off these surfaces a little like a table tennis ball run amuck. Added complications include water pipes and air condi-

tioners in or near the room. Minimize noise with sound-absorbing materials such as carpet and area rugs and fabric window coverings. If that's not enough, Hughes says, consider upholstering walls, building a buffer wall or repainting ceiling and walls with textured paint filled with tiny particles that trap sound. A suspended ceiling of acoustical tile is another option, though the look is more suited to utility area than living areas.

Wood paneling might deaden outside sounds if you leave air space or add insulation between the paneling and the wall. Sam Botero, a New York designer, says.

But Botero is a firm believer in carpet. In one apartment, Botero cut down the noise from a child's room by carpeting the floor, a wall and a platform which held the bed.

For a teenage drummer's room, he carpeted the floor and put the drums on a carpeted platform. The platform cut down the vibrations traveling along the floorboards to other rooms. He also added a dropped acoustical tile ceiling as a courtesy to upstairs neighbors.



Fabricsofteners: Drapes on the window and carpeting on a hardwood floor help muffle the sounds that invade this bedroom.

Control noise or it controls you

(AP) — You can learn to tune noise out of your mind, says Dr. Kenneth Roy, an acoustics researcher at Armstrong World Industries in Lancaster, Pa.

"Buy your body receives it, and there's a stress reaction," he says. So get remedies are in order.

How much noise is too much depends on what you are doing, whether you like the sound and the noise level to which you're accustomed. A noise unnoticeable in the middle of the afternoon will be annoying in the middle of the night.

Noise is measured on a decibel (db) scale which goes from zero, or

the absence of sound, to about 120 db equal to a 747 jet taking off. Most people are comfortable up to about 65 decibels, with quiet registered at 40 decibels. To sleep, 30 or below is considered within the comfort zone.

In the home, major sources of unwanted noise are appliances, television, sound system, shouting and rowdy play. To ideally deal with the first, replace old dishwashers, refrigerators and clothes washers. Newer appliances have an acoustical barrier such as a sound absorbing material built in. Buy a white noise machine or use a small fan near

the bed or desk to mask sounds from other rooms, such as television or conversation.

Most sound comes into the house through windows and gaps in doors. Weatherstripping is a first step. Give it a try with masking tape. If the noise level goes down, install weatherstripping and a plastic or rubber strip that fits between the bottom of the door and the door sill. Weatherstrip windows.

More expensive remedies include replacing hollow-core doors with solid doors and single-pane windows with double-pane glass or storm windows.

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