



# '80s family rooms: home space that's

**N**EAR THE fireplace, Mom reads the toddlers a bedtime story. Elder brother practices shots at the pool table. Dad and Grandma watch TV; he's on his stationary bicycle, she's on an over-stuffed sofa. And over by the patio, Sis works on a science project.

This is the multifunctional room of the '80s: Home space that's flexible, practical and fun. Depending on its inhabitants, the room can be an entertainment center, exercise area, guest suite, sewing room, game room — you name it.

"It's part of the open-planned home," says one interior designer. "Walls are coming down between dining room, kitchens and family rooms. Larger spaces provide more options." But even small rooms, such as seldom-used spare bedrooms, can become multifunctional.

The criteria is lifestyle: Who is going to be using the room, and what does he want to do there? Evaluate and plan the room's furnishings and "extras." Whether you consult a designer or assemble the room yourself, here are tips to keep in mind.

How do you get ideas for multifunctional interiors? Read home sections of newspapers and magazines that focus on home design. Visit furniture show-rooms and antique stores. Consult an interior designer. Finally, close your eyes and imagine the perfect multipurpose environment.

**HERE ARE SOME examples:**

- One family defined their multifunctional room as a space for munching, music and games. They installed a mini-kitchen, complete with microwave and refrigerator, and easy-to-clean, hard-working tile flooring.

- They refurbished a player piano and gave it a place of prominence. Finishing touches were an arcade game and two antique slot machines.

- A couple with grown children decided to knock down the wall between the kitchen and dining room of their home. The result was a "great room," an informal area with a kitchen at one end, a vaulted ceiling and a fireplace. Their goal was to create a welcoming, informal atmosphere for food preparation, dining and relaxing with guests.

- A young professional couple in-

stalled an indoor whirlpool bath in their bedroom, with exercise equipment and a TV. "First you sweat, then the reward," was their comment.

- A family with working parents and small children designed an intimate family retreat around a fireplace and media center. Along one wall are shelves and bins for the children's books and toys. Sofas are soft, long and low — perfect for snuggling and bedtime stories.

There are many elements to juggle — televisions, guests' needs, office needs — when designing your family room.

Know what's missing from most model homes? Television sets.

The decorators of these meticulous interiors know that a TV set can be instant death to good design.

What if some family members are avid sports fans and insist on a large-screen TV? Your design dilemma is to tame the one-eyed monster so it doesn't dominate the space.

**INCORPORATE THE TV** into a larger open storage and display system, holding games, stereos and books.

This mutes the importance of the TV and tempts the eye with interesting objects that suggest alternative activities.

Minimize the impact of the TV screen by creating other focal areas in the room.

A chess table can be located next to windows with a view and natural light.

The more options you provide visually and physically, the more likely you are to get a genuine recreation room and not just a movie theater.

Other TV concealers are pullout shelves with swivel bases. The shelves make it possible to turn the TV toward various parts of a room; cabinetry with doors camouflages the cyclops when not in use. Or transform an antique armoire into a television and video cabinet.

Even though you rarely have overnight guests, you need a guest room. How can you have both a media and a guest room?

Make comfort a priority. A cozy armchair and overstuffed convertible sofa will probably be all the major furniture the room can handle.

Two or three small nesting tables

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