



by Catherine Fantauzzi  
First Impressions Decor

## Bathroom—spa or not?

In the aftermath of current world events, design trends introduced at the latest industry shows reflect a desire for comfort, calming influences, a simpler way of life, and focusing on making our homes safe and secure.

Today, bathrooms have become spa-like. Tub and shower areas are larger than ever with all the bells and whistles to pamper tired bones.

Function must also measure up. Efficiency and convenience should be high on the list as you choose cabinetry, layout, fixtures, lighting and accessories.

The prime purpose of a bathroom is to be able to wash, bathe or shower in comfort. The standard fixtures include washbasin, bathtub/shower and toilet.

Between the builder and the purchaser, the layout of a bathroom takes a significant amount of planning. Beyond the obvious decisions of budget, layout, style, fixtures and colour, there are also safety issues and building codes to consider. The National Kitchen and Bath Association sets planning guidelines that deal with required amounts of counter space; how and where fixtures should be

positioned; how much cabinet space should be allotted; safety considerations; and other key design factors.

In addition to the standard fixtures, other details include a well-lit mirror, storage, faucets, a towel bar, practical flooring, toilet paper dispenser, medicine cabinet, suitable lighting, and some form of seating. Consideration should also be given to energy efficiency and the amount of people using this particular bathroom; perhaps an extra washbasin could be added, or the bathtub and shower could be separate. Also to be kept in mind is the need for any special arrangements due to disabilities.

Whatever the layout, all bathroom spaces must connect to plumbing. Efficient plans usually line up all fixtures with pipes along one wall. All bathroom spaces require ventilation as well as heat. This is achieved by means of either a window or sky-

light or a fan and duct, or a combination of both. All materials selected for a bathroom should be water-resistant and should have no slippery surfaces when wet.



### Storage.

Logical design begins with a careful estimate of what is to be stored and a consideration of where suitable storage spaces should go. An under-counter cabinet may be large enough in some cases to accommodate toiletries, towels, etc., needed in a bathroom. Additional storage cabinetry along a wall or above the toilet, along with open shelves filled with towels and toiletries, can also be added. Bathrooms used by children should have extra storage space wherever practical.

### Lighting.

The required safety standards should be followed to keep water and electricity apart. The main switch should be placed outside the bathroom door and recessed fittings into ceilings should be used. For instance, a recessed waterproof fitting must be used for lighting a shower enclosure. Hanging lights are not appropriate for bathroom use because water from the bath or shower may splash onto the fixture. Efficient lighting for shaving and make-up is best provided by light at the both ovetop and the sides around the mirror rather than one overhead light. Adjustable recessed downlights in the ceiling can introduce an element of accent lighting if desired.

### Today's Trends.

Space and budget permitting, bathrooms can become attractive with efficient lighting and good use of materials and colours. There is a vast array of luxurious materials on the market these days to reflect the spa ambiance. According to the National Kitchen and Bath Association, current trends in bath design are: faucets with separate handles; mixed-metal faucets; tempered glass basins; basins placed on a counter rather than being inset; contour bathtubs and separate glass showers; his and her basins;

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body spray systems; larger tiles with more texture; heat grids under the tiles; heated towel bars; halogen recessed lighting; and extensive use of solid-surface materials and natural stone. White fixtures continue to be the most popular colour.

### Decorating.

Paint is the cheapest and easiest decorating tool. The trick is to take the base colour and make it look more vibrant by spicing it up with sharper accent colours. By using different colours on different surfaces you can make some areas come forward and others recede. Plain painted walls can be wallpapered or stencilled or faux finished. Tiles can be decorated by using a speciality paint technique with an acrylic paint; for instance, stencilling a motif on randomly selected wall tiles.

In bathrooms that are chopped up by windows and doors, try using a brightly coloured tile line around the room to move the eye through the space. A small, all-white bathroom can be given a totally different feel by filling it with plants and your choice of coloured accessories, while a dark room can be brought to life with a contrasting colour trim and brightly coloured accessories.

Simple projects with fabrics, such as window treatments and shower curtains, can soften the feel of the bathroom. Other ideas that are simple include surrounding the mirror with an attractive frame, using decorative shower curtain hooks, adding a wood cornice moulding or hanging a full-length mirror.



If you have open wall space or open shelving, you can display prints, photos, paintings or china.

Texture can be used to create a mood. Marble surfaces, mirrors, tiles, windows and hardware reflect and excite. These glossy finishes make rich dark colours look like jewels and make light colours sparkle.

Matte textures bring warmth. Wood, fabrics, towels, rugs, textured walls and/or wallpaper are ways to complement the bath's hard surfaces.

On a simple level, small details such as faucets, soap dishes, and towel racks — even the towels themselves — can add to the design quality and visual interest of a bathroom.

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