

Kick Starter

Identifying a jumping-off point in each space, designer *Jess Knauf* infuses a Colorado home with inspired style.



When your home's not stacking up in the personality department, where do you even start? Interior designer Jess Knauf faced that challenge when she turned this 1920s Tudor in Denver, with its dark walls and dark-stained woodwork, into a light and bright home for a family of five.

The answer was to identify a starting point for each room: a favorite pattern to incorporate, a piece of furniture to reuse, even a tricky layout problem to solve. For example, the homeowners' existing bedding informed the design of the primary

bedroom. Hand-me-down slipper chairs worked in the living room when dressed in a new striped fabric. The worn green paint of a wood bench at the kitchen table suggested a happy blue-and-green palette.

"The homeowner had a lot of cool family heirlooms we were able to work in without it feeling stuffy," Knauf says. Other pieces are new but offer similar vintage charms.

The designer's approach of building on furnishings that were already there helps the house not only flow visually but also look and feel like the family who lives here.

The Starting Point **AN AWKWARD LAYOUT**

The placement of the front door and fireplace presented a furniture-positioning puzzle in the living room. Knauf's solution is an L-shape banquette in mauve performance velvet to maximize seating in this small space. Bullion trim ups the formality just a touch.



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A glossy white laminate tulip table is a pleasing contrast with cane chairs and a wood bench, plus it's easy to clean.

The Starting Point
WALLPAPER AS FOCAL POINT

To visually define the kitchen's new breakfast area, which was achieved by knocking down the walls of the former guest room, Knauf opted for the cheerful backdrop of block-print floral wallpaper from Gastón y Daniela. "The small scale of the pattern is really great with all the white trim," Knauf says. The family's heirloom green bench worked perfectly and brings personality and patina to this hardworking space.



make it
Family-Friendly

Designer Jess Knauf shares her tricks for designing spaces that stand up to life with kids.

SEAL THE WALLPAPER

"Anytime there are children or dogs, I send wallpaper to this company called ProSeal Plus, and they apply an invisible, wipeable finish to the wallpaper," she says.

PROTECT FABRICS

Performance fabrics are engineered to resist stains and clean up more easily. For fabrics that aren't performance, Knauf uses a company, Fiber-Seal, to add a layer of protection.

SAVE ON RUGS

You won't see Knauf splurge on a rug to go under a table where kids eat. Instead, she chooses inexpensive natural-fiber rugs that add texture but wear well.

The Starting Point
BOLD BEDDING

The homeowner liked her duvet (Bloomsbury Green from Biscuit Home) so much that Knauf designed the whole room around it. A stained wood or solid-color headboard would be the more predictable pairing with all that pattern, but a contrasting print actually brings in another layer of interest. Because the headboard pattern is small in scale and neutral in color, it reads more like a texture and doesn't compete with the bedding. A grass-cloth-covered bachelor's chest nods to the headboard color and texture while visually balancing the king-size bed and adding more storage space than a typical nightstand would.



A pale blue-green lampshade connects with the bolster and wall color (Benjamin Moore Breath of Fresh Air).



The Starting Point
TOILE CURTAINS

"The draperies are the biggest things in the room," Knauf says. "They're whimsical while being sophisticated." The fabric, Carnival Toile from Palm Orleans, packs the visual punch of wallpaper and offers the softness and room-darkening qualities essential for a baby's room. Knauf kept most of the other surfaces solid pastels, which calm the high-contrast pattern. In a creative reuse, the dresser/changing table is a sideboard that could later be returned to service in the dining room.

The Starting Point
AMERICAN COLOR SCHEME

A red, white, and blue palette plus striped pillow shams and starred Roman shades set a playful tone in the sons' shared bedroom. Jenny Lind beds and a Shaker-style nightstand are classics too. "What's great about a spindle bed is you can find beautiful antique ones, or you can find them on Overstock," Knauf says. (These are from Crate & Barrel.) Walls painted in Benjamin Moore Bright and Early with trim in darker Denim Wash go well with tomato red accents today, and they could work with a different accent color as the boys grow. ■

