

ASK THE DESIGNER: Updating your college kid's bedroom

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?My son is headed off to university next week and I'd love to redo his room while he's away. How can I make some changes without it feeling like it's not his room anymore??

Moving away for school is a big change and can be very exciting!

It can also be a little bit overwhelming for your son, so before starting to redo his bedroom I would recommend telling him about it. This is a time when the kids are becoming independent of their parents and it's important that we treat them as grown-ups. Our kids rooms' are FULL of stuff that we may think is junk, but to them it's treasure. Long forgotten t-shirts hanging out of drawers, concert tickets and crumpled history essays lie atop dressers, and who knows what horrifying items lurk beneath the surface? There are some things you may be happier not knowing about. It's best to give your college-goer ample warning before clearing out his stuff.

You'll want to give him an opportunity to dispose of any contraband or embarrassing items and to set aside anything sentimental that you may be unsure of.

Once your son has had a chance to go through his own stuff it's your turn!

Sort through belongings and store the things you don't have room for in labelled bins somewhere. God forbid you throw out that special something. I myself have made that trip down to Goodwill to retrieve something of my daughter's because I didn't realize its importance!

Reserve 10 per cent of the room for items from the past, and the rest of the space should reflect the present and future accomplishments. Organize loose photos of their friends on a corkboard- to avoid having them scattered everywhere. Get rid of some old ones to make room for the new ones (there WILL be new ones). Get rid of any participation trophies and only keep the ones that he's actually earned on display. This is a time in your kid's life where the focus should be on their achievements.

Now for the décor: I'm always reminding my clients to think about how they will live in the space. Your son will come home for visits during the holidays or weekends, he may need a place to study, or just a quiet place to get away from the craziness that living in residence sometimes is. You want your kid's room to feel like a guestroom, but their own guestroom; a more mature version of their old room with a relaxed vibe.

Remove any old wall paper, curtain panels or bedding with themes on them. This means no more Super Mario pillowcases or soccer ball drapes. Freshen up the space with a new wall colour. Farrow & Ball has a ton of beautiful colours that are a little bit more muted and understated.

Bring in your kids' favourite colours via occasional furniture. A funky colour desk chair or end table, or a bold geometric print for a window covering is a fun way to bring personality into the space without looking childish. If you think your kids may not be ready to let go of some of their favourite childhood memorabilia, you can include them in the accessories.

If your son has a hobby, or really loves his sports make space for a bobble head on the shelf, or frame a signed record and hang it on the wall. Your son's personality will still shine through in his room without looking childish. You can easily change a poster on the wall and swap out the accessories on the counter if and when your kids outgrow them.

Remember that there are a lot of new things happening for your son right now so leave space for new hobbies and interests. Make sure he knows that his old room is still his and that the makeover is all about getting him ready for the next exciting stage of his life! I'm sure he will love the space you create for him.

Feel free to send me your comments or questions to askjean@nichedecor.ca