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The Everything Room

Perfect 10: Designs Clients Love

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Scan through clients' room-addition wish lists these days, and you likely will spot a problem: They don't want *this* feature or *that* feature -- they want it *all*. The space must be a comfortable family room but also a pleasant area for entertaining guests. It must be cozy but open. Casual but elegant. And it must be added without making adjacent rooms less accessible to light and outdoor views. Introducing one of the most sought-after additions to the home: the "everything room."



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What do you do when your clients want it all? Give it to them, of course. Bob Fleming of Classic Remodeling & Construction in Charleston, S.C., proved with ingenuity that it can be done. He designed the "everything room" shown here for clients who requested all of the above and needed the addition to occupy a compact space, too.

The townhouse had a two-story screen porch that the family never used. "It was always too hot or too dirty," the homeowner explains. "We asked Bob to make it a sun room." Because it would be adjacent to the existing den, the clients wanted the new room to expand the home's entertainment space yet also be a room the family could enjoy. They wanted lots of light and bookshelves in the room. One other requirement: Because the master bedroom overlooked the upper portion of the porch, the new room could not compromise that feeling of outdoor access.



Before

After

Expanding the interior space considerably left the exterior scale little altered. The entertainment room absorbed much of the underused side yard, but the house retains outdoor access via a new patio and the master bedroom balcony.

Undaunted, Fleming created a soaring "light box" with insulated glass windows on three sides, including large clerestories atop the tall wall of bookcases. The existing master bedroom windows, newly trimmed as interior units, now overlook the family room below and have a straight shot through the new upper tier of glass to outdoor views and sunlight. "The new space didn't make the interior space darker," the homeowner says, and the pale yellow room is "wonderfully sunny." The addition opens to a new deck for outdoor access.

The room glows even at night. Light beams down from can lights dotting the coffered ceiling and up from low-voltage rope lights strung through frosted-glass caps on the

MOISTURE OUT.

Fight
basement
moisture
three ways.

CONFIDENCE IN.

crown molding midway up the two-story walls.

Adjacent to the "light box" is a new, one-story entertainment area with the master bedroom deck on top. At one end of the entertainment area is a fully accessorized wet bar featuring a classy granite counter and glass-door cabinets showcasing glassware and crystal. A broad, columned archway links this entertainment area to the rest of the house. Only the flooring -- dark slate instead of the hardwood used elsewhere -- marks the division between spaces here. Plantation shutters separate the new room from the den to make a quiet, cozy library. When the shutters are open, the connection between rooms is wide and hospitable. "The addition doubled the size of the family area, and it's great entertainment space," the homeowner says. "It's a wonderful room."



A library ladder serves the wall of bookshelves. For peace and quiet, plantation shutters separate the room from the den. When company comes, the shutters open to connect the rooms visually.

"Everything room" clients nationwide are requesting the same mix of intimacy and expansiveness. In fact, when Sid Levin, director of design at Authentic Construction in St. Paul, Minn., asks clients what would make the room feel right, 80% of them use the words *airy* and *light* as well as *comfortable* and *cozy*.

Airy and light: Levin says a volume ceiling is a must in at least a portion of the room. In two-story spaces, homeowners like upper-level windows and balconies that wrap around the room. Michael Strong of Brothers Strong in Houston says his clients opt for cathedral ceilings that rise 8 or 9 feet to the roof gable. He fills the entire gabled wall with windows. "People love that glass because it brings the outdoors in," Strong says. Levin says connecting the outside and inside is "absolutely desirable," even if the view is not that great. Use landscaping to improve the view or provide privacy screening.

Comfortable and cozy: To expand its size and versatility, the room needs to be open to neighboring spaces but also needs boundaries to maintain a comfort level. That's done with half-walls and changes in ceiling or floor level, Levin says. These devices allow easy connections between spaces but clearly define and enclose smaller, more intimate rooms or areas.

Soft colors reinforce the warm, cozy atmosphere. "We're seeing a huge trend toward rich wall colors -- caramel, light sage green, soft, warm yellow -- natural colors that offset the sterility of our high-tech world," Levin says. Strong combines these earth tones with light but muted trim. So does J.P. Perron of Perron Construction in Manheim, Pa. He says people like earth tones and bold colors, but "they are scared of color" at first. That's one reason he gives his clients 10 hours of consulting with an interior designer with whom he works. After talking with the designer, their fear goes away, says Perron, who doesn't charge because helping clients with decision-making saves him time.

Lighting: Strong now includes another expert -- his electrician -- in design meetings to help put together the lighting package. "Lighting is a huge deal, and it's so sophisticated and difficult to keep up with" Strong says. "Everything rooms" feature a symphony of low-voltage, under-cabinet lights, recessed can lights, wall washes and other fixtures, orchestrated with dimmers and multiple switches to create different ambiances.

Amenities: To enhance the warm, welcoming role of the "everything room," Levin recommends stone fireplaces. Perron warms the space with rich, custom millwork. Natural flooring, especially oversize stone squares,

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