

Homework

According to recent research, British homes are getting smaller. The results of one study suggest that new houses in the UK are, on average, twenty percent smaller than those built seventy years ago. Even if you don't live in a new house, the chances are that if you live in the centre of a British city, you probably won't have that much space. The cost of houses means that many people now live in small apartments, and some people even live in 'micro-flats'. (*The Guardian* newspaper reports that about one in fifteen flats in London are now smaller than the 37 m² the government recommends as a minimum.)

But small homes don't have to feel small or crowded. With some simple changes, you can make your living space feel calm, comfortable and larger than it actually is. Here, interior designer Jason Chen shares his top tips with you.

Read the article. Number the designer's advice (a–d) in order. There is one extra piece of advice.

- a** don't have too many possessions
- b** use light colours
- c** paint the walls dark colours
- d** consider where to store your stuff

My first piece of advice is to use colour. Many people think that you should paint small or dark rooms white or another light colour to make them look bigger and brighter, but I disagree. If a room is dark because it doesn't have a window, it will always look dark, even if you paint it white. Instead, I recommend using dark, calm colours like dark blue or dark green – the room will be much more interesting and actually, dark walls often make small rooms feel much bigger.

Secondly, think about how you store your possessions. Another way to make your rooms look bigger is to put shelves up on the walls, rather than have big, heavy pieces of furniture. For me, wall shelves are great because as well as being a useful way to store your possessions, they can be used to display art, photos, plants or other things that give you pleasure.

Finally, try to keep your home free from stuff – that's all those things you don't really need that makes your house look messy. I recently read a report which said that we buy twice as many things as we did fifty years ago, so it's no surprise that our houses are full of stuff. Before you buy anything, think about whether or not you really need it. The 19th-century artist William Morris said that you shouldn't have anything in your house that isn't beautiful or useful and I think that's great advice to follow in the 21st century, too.

Complete the information with the numbers from the article.

- 1 How much smaller houses are now compared to seventy years ago:%
- 2 The number of flats in London that are 'micro-flats': in
- 3 The smallest size that the UK government recommends homes should be: m²
- 4 The length of time it has taken for the number of things we buy to double: years
- 5 The century that the artist William Morris lived in:th

Read the extracts from the article. Are they facts (F) or opinions (O)?

- 1 British homes are getting smaller.
- 2 New houses in the UK are, on average, twenty percent smaller than those built seventy years ago.
- 3 One in fifteen flats in London is now smaller than the 37 m² the government recommends as a minimum.
- 4 Many people think that you should paint small or dark rooms white or another light colour to make them look bigger and brighter.
- 5 I recommend using dark, calm colours like dark blue or dark green.
- 6 For me, wall shelves are great.
- 7 We consume twice as many things as we did fifty years ago.
- 8 I think that's great advice to follow in the twenty-first century, too.