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These 5 big dorm room ideas will make the space feel like 'your little house'



Dorm room shopping feels both exciting and overwhelming.

Such big plans for so little a floor plan, plus there's often a roommate to contend with.

Jill Martin has decorated scores of dorm rooms for friends' children. The "Today" show contributor for segments "Ambush Makeover" and "Steals and

Deals" said the small spaces can be everything college students hope for, by spending \$50 or less for many items.

Martin, who sells her own line of home decor on QVC's G.I.L.I. brand (Got It. Love It.) says she knows students are eager to jump right in and get shopping and parents just want it completed. But wait.

Before you get started, scroll through websites, Pinterest or magazines and get inspired.

"You're making this your little house," Martin said. "You're going to want to treat every space like your special place. It should feel as much like home and as comfortable as possible."

Here are her recommendations for a stress-free move-in day.

Choose a theme starting with the bedding

"Do you want it cozy-comfy? Or it to be something else? Everything is going to happen from that," Martin said.

Themes can be based on colors, or a certain look like country-glam. Just make sure the look is cohesive as a too-busy look makes a small room look even smaller.

Martin recommends the bedding serve as the starting point with the theme. Students can work outward from there.



"People get overwhelmed and this is the place to start. If you decide you want to do a print on your bed, then you're going to want to do solids for your room," she said.

If you're going to splurge anywhere, go ahead and get quality bedding.

Go vertical for storage when horizontal space is limited

Grab the measuring tape and measure the space under the dorm bed, above the bed, above the space where a desk will go, any closet space and basically any vertical wall space. Vertical space is a friend in a dorm since horizontal space is at a premium.

Then head to [The Container Store](#) or any mass-market store like [Target](#) or [Walmart](#) and hunt for cubbies, stackable boxes, baskets, shelves

or other storage units. These can be used to store clothes, snacks, school supplies and other items.

Once students have decided on bedding, move to the desk and get that organized. Using the purchased containers, build vertical storage up from the desk, she said.

"Every single thing in your dorm room should have a function," Martin said. "If you're getting a stand for next to your bed, it should have storage."



For the closet, Martin recommends felt hangers instead of plastic or wire because they provide 30% more closet space.

Transform a room on a budget with these three things

Dorm room makeovers are so darn cute it almost makes parents want to start grabbing up dorm room decor. But Martin cautions against going knick-knack purchase crazy.

"There are ways to make the rooms beautiful without spending a lot," she said.

Besides, there isn't room and later students might find they need the space for something useful.



These inexpensive items can easily transform a room:

Lighting. The harsh glare of florescent lighting is not conducive to any kind of positive vibe. Fairy lights help set a mood, whether the student is an extrovert or introvert.

Throw blankets. Martin is a big fan of choosing a cozy throw to add depth and warmth to a room.



Frames: Leave frames empty if they're just really cool by themselves. Or fill frames with photos of friends and family, or build them into an art piece with inspirational sayings. Picture and photo frames provide a landscape of possibilities.

Live in the space then make adjustments

These are the things that can really plunge the planning, shopping and decorating into disarray and dysfunction.

Don't forget to measure your door room spaces before you go shopping.

"You get out that tape measure – in a dorm room, it's your best friend," Martin said.

Don't expect everything to be perfect right away.

Martin recommends living in the dorm room a month and expect to go back out shopping again.

"I think the mistake people make is that they move in and you can't expect everything to be final and done the first day," she said. "You have to live in a space first. You may find out you need a bigger shower caddy because your shampoo doesn't fit. Or you need a throw pillow."

Don't forget about reusing or repurposing items from home to save money. For example, students often don't need a complete wardrobe makeover the first semester. The hooks that hang on the back of doors can be reused, as can favorite picture frames, and baskets can be re-purposed as storage or to hold rolled up towels.



Remember, roommates will prep you for adulting

Don't forget to put things in writing with a roommate. Sharing space with a roommate is not easy, but one of those things that goes a long way toward adulting. Martin suggests coming up with dorm room rules together.

"I think the biggest thing is respecting each others' quirks and their needs to live happily," she said. "I believe in writing it down. I think that's really important."

